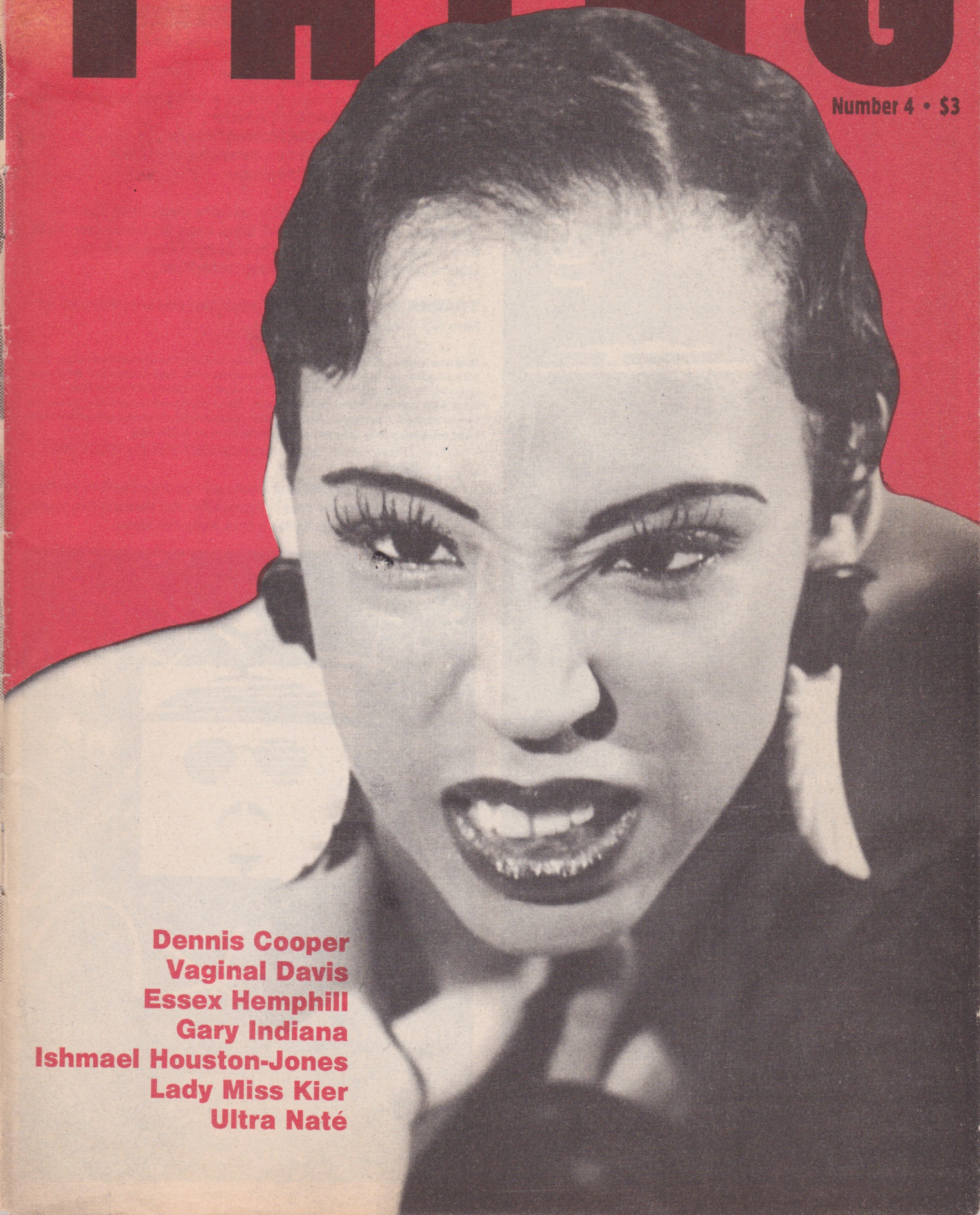


THING

Number 4 • \$3



Dennis Cooper
Vaginal Davis
Essex Hemphill
Gary Indiana
Ishmael Houston-Jones
Lady Miss Kier
Ultra Naté

the garden

Original soundtrack on
Mute cassettes and compact discs.
Music by Simon Fisher Turner.
Directed by Derek Jarman.

"The Garden" will screen in Philadelphia, Boston, Cleveland,
St. Louis, Houston, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Pittsburgh
and Washington. Watch local listings for details.



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THING

She Knows Who She Is

Number Four • Spring 1991

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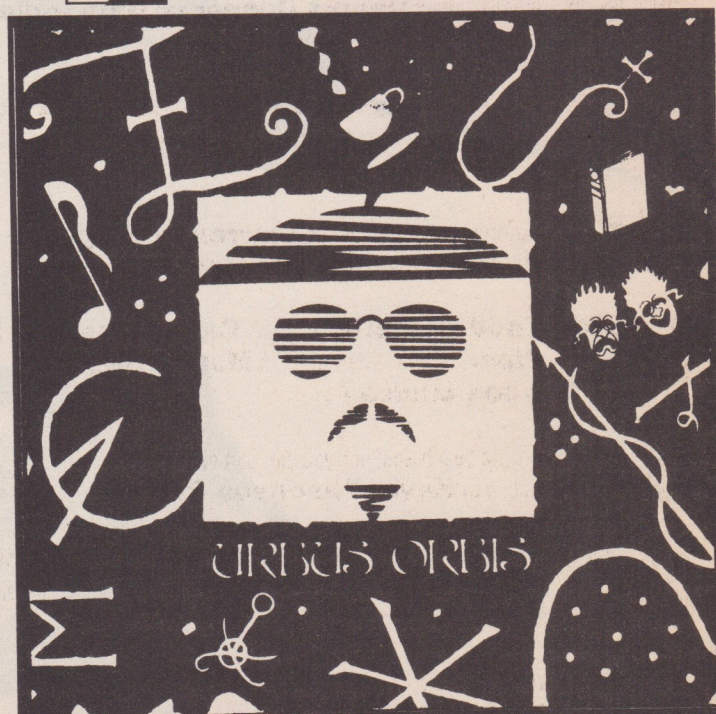
THANKS Steve Lafreniere, Michael Thompson, Brett and Carrie at PLU, Ralph and Karen, Nick, John and Francisco at Pulp

Thing is published capriciously. Subscriptions are seven dollars for the next three issues published postpaid. Single issues available at your favorite gay bookseller. Wholesale inquiries invited. Donations encouraged! *Thing* encourages unsolicited submissions of any printed matter; only those with self-addressed stamped envelopes will be returned. Artists' payment is the satisfaction of contribution. Editorial inclusion casts no aspersions on one's racial or sexual categorization (Things know who they are.) Opinions expressed are those of individual contributors and do not always reflect those of *Thing*. *Thing* does not sell or rent its mailing list. © 1991 *Thing*

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COVER Give us an homage to Josephine and we'll take it any time!
Photo and styling by Stephen Winter, Hair/Makeup by Colin Josephs,
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- 4** **Joe Lindsay** gets a holy boner and a few folks are having sacred cows! ... A super dyke calendar for '91... **Lafreniere** and friends plan a Zinefest in Chicago... **Vincent Webster** recalls Wigstock '90... *Brother To Brother*, the long awaited follow up to *In The Life*.
- 6** New diva on the block, **Ultra Naté**, talks to **Robert Ford**. Plus a run down on the mark of the disco diva.
- 8** Music reviews ... **Scott Free**, **Roger Noel**, **Robert Ford**, and **Lee Collins** mouth off about the new tunes they love to mouth off about.
- 10** Music listings... **Larry Heard**, **André Halmon**, **Lee Collins**, **Edward Crosby**, **Steve Freshwater**, and **Scott Free** chart their current faves.
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- 19** Put on your thinking caps. **Kathryn Hixson**, art critic and movie, pumps writers **Dennis Cooper** and **Gary Indiana** for all it's worth. Heady stuff indeed.
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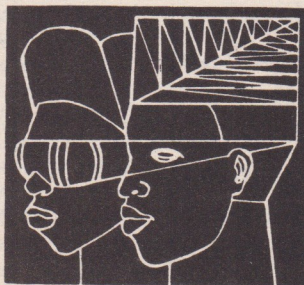


Clockwise from top left: **Hapi Phace** smiled into town March 6 with a cute show at Club Lower Links, with autographs afterwards. Photo by Trent Adkins. Would you vote for this queen? Queer Nation's Chicago Mayoral Candidate **Joan Jett Blakk** in performance at "The National SCUM—A Tabloid Trash Fundraiser" for ACT UP Chicago, November 15 at Smart Bar. **Gurlene Hussey** and Joan Jett Blakk at a recent drag ball. Miss **Fraulein** mit leathermeister friend and **Kermit Berg**. Photos by Kurt Weston.

BROTHER TO BROTHER

Brother to Brother is the long awaited follow-up to the 1986 anthology **In the Life**, edited by the late Joseph Beam. This new anthology is 300-plus pages in length and contains poetry, essays, journal entries, and short fiction that, like it's forerunner, attempt to empower Black gay men. "The silences surrounding the lives and experiences of Black gay men have been aided and abetted by the tremendous amount of denial, homophobia, and heterosexism that exists in the African American community" says writer Essex Hemphill, a close friend of Beam's who completed editing **Brother to Brother** after his death in 1988. **In the Life** and **Brother to Brother** are both powerful and affirming works from which anyone can learn.

Brother to Brother: New Writings By Black Gay Men is available by mail for ten dollars from Alyson Publications, 40 Plympton Street, Boston, MA 02118.



ateline:

WIGSTOCK

à la **Sammy Davis Jr.** while simultaneously peeling off polyester Sammy drag to reveal her falsies bra. Hari Bo!

Lypsinka did her phone number. **Floyd** of the People Tree looked like a chicken and definitely cannot sing, so we were all sick of the dragon scene and happy when that little twinkle in our eyes, **Kier**, came out and put the Groove in our hearts!

Leaving the park, the *cognoscenti* and yours truly,

Wigstock is like Woodstock, but with wigs-cum central theme. The be-all, end-all place to be Labor Day weekend in Manhattan, and this year was bigger and better than others, which didn't baffle the star and m.c., **Lady Bunny**, the ultimate in control and entertainment up on center stage. This event is one that brings everyone together to "oooh" and "aaah" in unison; not only are the queens and professional hams in heaven, but also them normal boys and girls, because this is the brightest spot in the universe on Labor Day. 1990's treat was **Deee-Lite**, those kids from down the block who we all know and love. I don't know much about the Asian boy, but I can add a spicy word or two about **Dimitri**'s past...

RuPaul "this is the front, and this is the back" **Charles** served; she's very, very fierce on stage now. After all, she is the Queen of Manhattan, and that is no easy task. She was not the only one getting a life on stage, for there was **Jo-Jo**—who to me is like a God—giving us body and boy-girl drag. It just goes to show what so much drugs and dance floors can do, but there really were too many acts to mention, and besides, it is the real people who make the day. One queen sang "I did it my way"

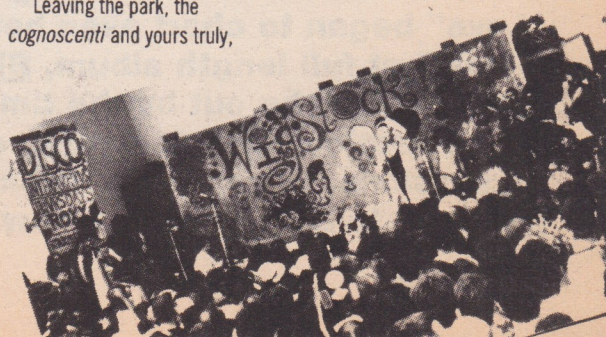
moved on to **Silencio** in order to get into the night thing and the real music. **Skinny Vinny** was there. I was happy to introduce **Jeffrey** to Ru. He had not heard of her in Philadelphia.

Another soothing moment was Monday night out at the Pathmark in Jersey City of all places. This is the highest priced supermarket I've ever seen. I spend hours there comparison shopping. I was wheeling down the frozen food aisle at about eleven p.m. when I saw a large, beautiful girl who looked very much like **Queen Latifah**, but how? Not in a grocery store! Not in New Jersey! She did have on a real gold bracelet and one of those t-shirts you only get from record companies as promotion. The odds are stacking. Then a brother comes drooling up to me supplicating for a pen or pencil for her autograph, and yep, it is! Queen Latifah right here in Jersey! I ask her if she really is herself, and she says "yes." As bait, I say, "I know **Scott Gibson**," my friend who designed the jackets they wore on her album. She says, "Wow! Yes, I know Scott! He's a great designer!"

There is nothing better than actually having something to say to the famous.

I must add that I'm glad to see a shift from the vogue of wearing gold chains to the wearing of wooden African beads instead. It's high time we stop feeding the sick black South African economy.

— **Vincent Webster**



Ultra Naté



by Robert Ford

Another dance diva is born with Baltimore's Ultra Naté. Not a pseudo-operatic show-off like Mariah or Whitney, Ultra's strength is her ability to convey pure raw emotion with her voice. Hers is the classic disco-Cinderella tale; hooking up with local DJ/musicians the Basement Boys and snagging former Billboard writer Bill Coleman for management has suddenly found her on the brink of stardom. Her first single, "It's Over Now" has become a club anthem. Her newest double A-side single "Scandal/Is It Love" began to chart even before its release. Her first full length album, Blue Notes In the Basement, will be out by the time you read this. With a hectic schedule of club dates and remix sessions, Ultra took a few moments to do a "phoner," to talk about her new and successful career.

Robert Ford: Is Ultra Naté your real name?

Ultra Naté: (laughs) Yes. Oh, gosh, that is always the first question I get! Yes, it's my real name.

RF: What's the underground scene like in Baltimore, is there a big underground dance music scene there?

UN: Not from the club perspective. There aren't really a lot of clubs to go to that play the real underground club music. But as far as the music goes, it's very good. We're pretty up on what's goin' on in the music world right now. And they stay pretty much on top of it. Most of the DJs that work at the clubs work in record stores, too; they order the music and they're pretty abreast of what's happening.

RF: How did you get hooked up with the Basement Boys?

UN: Well, it was quite a few years ago and I was at a point where I had been out of school for a year, and I was just trying to figure out what I was going to do with myself, exactly. I've always liked the artsy kind of things, though at the time I thought I was gonna pursue medicine, that was my first love. But I used to do the artsy kind of stuff on the side. And one thing I wanted to try was doing some background vocals. I knew Tommy, Teddy, and Gerry through the club scene and through the record stores they worked at. So I knew them as friends. I knew they had put their own record out the year before, "Love Don't Live Here No More" on Jump Street. I went to Tommy and told him I was interested in doing some background vocals for him and he was like, "come on down and audition". I did, and they liked it, and we started working together. That's what I was doing for a couple of months, just working on different songs, background vocals. Until "It's Over Now" came into play.

RF: I saw in your bio where that was ad-libbed at two in the morning.

UN: Yeah (laughs) That was a very painful experience.

RF: I can only imagine. Did that get you started songwriting?

UN: It kind of snowballed after that. At first I really didn't believe that anything was gonna be done with it. I thought it was a cute little diddy that I did and

that was it. I didn't think they were gonna do anything with it. It wasn't until it started getting so much play and so much recognition and record deals and all that kind of stuff came that I thought about writing stuff. Just sit down and try it.

RF: "It's Over Now" first came out in the U.K., is that right?

UN: Right.

RF: Then it was licensed back by Warner Brothers U.S. It's odd that so much house music goes through that, where it breaks in Europe first. Did you go overseas in support of it?

UN: By ending up on a U.K. label, everything was gonna happen first over there anyway. I went to the U.K. to shoot the video, to do pictures for the album cover. Everything was done in the U.K. The music is so widely accepted over there. It's not as underground as it is over here. A club performer can get more recognition faster overseas than they can here, which is sad but true.

RF: Do you have a feeling for which tracks are going to be the hits? Like with "Scandal"?

UN: Well, I told the record label way, way back when "Scandal" was even rawer than it is on the record that this was a big song. I wanted it to be the next release because it wasn't identical to "It's Over Now" but it was in the same vein. I felt it was good to use that to establish my sound. And then you go off and explore other avenues. But when you're a new artist, it's important first to establish some kind of sound that people can identify you with.

RF: When does the album ship?

UN: It's supposed to be released March 4th.

RF: And the "Scandal" 12", is that out now?

UN: That will be out next Monday. "Scandal" is on the b-side, the a-side is "Is It Love."

RF: It seems like "Scandal" is already charting on all the music charts in this issue

UN: That's because it was gonna be released earlier. They decided to wait until the album was totally finished to have the album back it. Which is a good idea. But it had already leaked out, and people were already screamin' over it. ▼

DIVAFEST

What becomes a legend most? The divas behind the credits.

Disco divas have always been big fish in little ponds. Before hers became the voice that launched a thousand hit singles, Martha Wash was a name known only to die hard club tarts as one of Two Tons of Fun aka Weathergirls. Now that she's waited for everybody from Black Box to the C&C Music Company, she's *still* only known by true disco fans. It seems her hips are too wide to market on the cover of a cd. It also seems as if she'd rather just sing and get paid, and leave behind the video/tour/image side of it. A not unusual fate for the divas of the disco industry. A quick glance at other superstar session singers:

Sharon Redd Sharon first burst upon the disco scene when multiple versions of "Can You Handle It" became disco sensations. "Beat the Streets" followed a few years later, the record that defined the New York sound with its crisp, simple syncopated synths and big throbbing bottom. She sustained a third Prelude album, which yielded the uninspired but serviceable "Activate" and hi-NRG surprise "You're a Winner." Sharon stumbled into obscurity after that, with only a couple of sporadically released, embarrassing singles out every few years since her mid 80's heyday.

Jocelyn Brown She, too was a Harlette for a bit, though it was the retro swing of "Somebody Else's Guy" that was her breakthrough. The summer it hit number one, every independent New York label that had a vocal by her in the can released a "Jocelyn Brown" single. The major labels came courting after that, but superstardom was elusive. A handful of commercial releases have met with lukewarm success. But she still occasionally shows up on a New York indy, lending her golden voice to a more Garage-like setting.

Toni Smith You'd have to be a disco sleuth to be a fan of this girl. She was the uncredited female vocal on Tom Browne's "Funkin For Jamacia." Later, she went on to do the underground classic "I Got the Hots For You" under the initials TZ. That song had more than a few clubgoers convinced that there was a new Chaka Khan record out. What else has she done? Beats me, I'm sure she sings on something.

Loleatta Holloway The mother of the essence of big wailing diva house. The most sampled voice of the eighties and nineties. Hits include "Hit and Run," "Love Sensation" (recently reinvented as Black Box's "Ride on Time"), "Crash Goes Love," "Seconds," and "Runaway." Loleatta is also known for her over-the-top talkover breaks, in which she ad-libs like the oldest snap! diva around. "Girl, get up and put your stuff back on!"

And the list goes on. Dance floors around the world have benefited from the work of Tina B., Corey Daye, Fonda Rae, Tanna Gardner, Valerie Simpson, Liz Torrez, Tina Fabrique, Mikki, Gayle Adams, Sharon Brown, Michelle Wallace, Linda Clifford, Norma Jean Wright, Xavier Gold, Thelma Houston, Jackie Moore, Shawn Christopher, Ava Cherry, Adeva, Gwen McCrae, Geraldine Hunt, Mary Wells, Jean Carne, Kym Mazelle, Dhar Braxton, Gwen Guthrie, Anita Ward, Paris Grey, O'Chi Brown, Sybil, Princess, Tia Monae, Melba Moore, Stephanie Mills, Karen Young, Edna Holt, Vickie Sue Robinson, Lori Eastside, among countless other unsung singers of the disco dream.

— RF

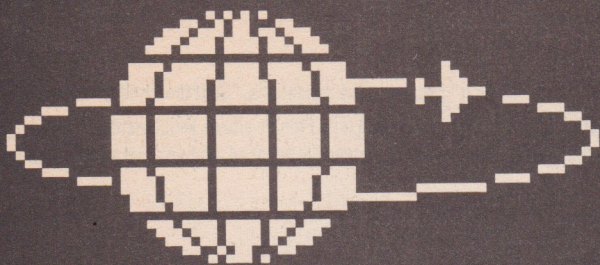
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music

reviews

UBQ Project Into the Night

House N Effect Records 12"

This record has five mixes (please), although luckily, one of the mixes is so different, it could be another song. It's Aaron Smith's mix and it's the one that should really be called "Into the Night." It's a nice, downtempo blend of bass and echoed synths, with a trumpet break that is an instant classic. You've been hearing it in Edward "Get Down" Crosby's mixes.

Actually, both songs are very nice. Terry Hunter's instrumental mix glides along, built around a 4-chord solid piano line that has become synonymous with deep house. Then comes this synth line that sounds like "play along to the record." You know when you're in the middle of working on track and your friends stop by and say "cool-look at all that equipment. Hey, can I try it?" and soon their grubby little hands are adding mush to your perfectly produced track? OK, it's not that bad. It's more like you've been up for three nights straight because you're in the studio tomorrow, and you're putting down a synth line and you doze off and then before you know it, the track is over, and you wake up and say "great, it's done. Now I can go to bed." Actually, I'm being far too abusive. This is a really nice record.

Ron Trent's mix has the title of the song groaned out by an either frustrated of horny young man. Or both. I would have liked to have seen him perform it in the studio. The mix clips along at a nice pace, due to the incessant, high eq'd snare. The strange speed change sound effects at the end of the mix are nice too, unless that's my turntable.

— Scott Free

Barbara Tucker Open Your Heart

Fourth Records 12"

In a word, beautiful. This piece is proof that dance music is on an up turn. The "R&B" mix is the mix. This mix makes it easy to forgive them for the other three mixes. At roughly 124 bpm, this song demonstrates great orchestration. Every instrument is played for maximum effect. If you like Mon-dee Oliver's "Stay Close", you'll love this.

So far I've talked about the mix and the music but what put the icing on the cake for me was Barbara. This girl sang this song like it was her last. I hope this is not the last time we hear her voice. This is a "10": in every category.

— Lee Collins

Sam Fan Thomas African Typic

Virgin Earthworks CD/CS

What a concept. The baddest and the best. Francophone Africa by way of Paris. Polished pop with a techno-sheen. And the guitars, like two hot leads buzzing your brain. Mixes well with Salsoul or merengue, or just fine on its own. Catch them live if you can. Outstanding tracks: "Noa" and the title track.

— Roger Noel

Vincent Floyd Cruising (Long ride)/Isolation/ Silent Noise

Resound Records 12"

All three of these are similar in feel. Lots of searing, soaring synths, shuffling beats and hypnotic bass lines. Unfortunately, the drum sounds are all pretty much the same. Silent noise has the best use of synths—very dense chords.

— Scott Free



WHO'S ZOOMIN' WHO?: C&C's Zelma Davis

**C&C Music Factory
Gonna Make You
Sweat**

Columbia CD/CS

Disco eats itself. This is high-powered corporate hit music, that has as much to do with contracts as collaboration; more boardroom than dance floor. But they've admittedly done their research — every disco hook and reference is here, from the Snap-meets-Bohannon hit title single, to the more-Blackbox-than-Blackbox "Just a Touch of Love (Everyday)". "A Groove Of Love (What's This Word Called Love)" teams Suzanne Vega via DNA's "do-do-do's" with a similar alliteration of the melody of disco moldy "Mother Popcorn".

But who is the "C&C Music Factory"? That's where the contract part comes in. You can't tell the players without a scorecard, so hang on to your hats. The "C&C Music Factory" is the superstar disco production duo Robert Civilés and David Cole (responsible for Seduction, etc.) "featuring" Freedom Williams, a Latin rapper that adds "street credibility". And then there's Zelma Davis, who sings on some tracks. But not the big hit single "Gonna Make You Sweat (Everybody Dance Now)" — that's one of the "support" vocals provided by everyone's favorite ghost vocalist Martha Wash. But Miss Davis lip-synchs it in the video wearing a push-up bra. Got it? This is certainly a music factory, molding raw materials into a saleable product. Destined for multi-platinum.

— Robert Ford

**The Untouchables
Take A Chance/I'm
For Real/Trippin'/
Yea C'mon'**

Strictly Rhythm Records 12"

"Take A Chance": the Todd Terry sound, again, in 1991. I hate to say it, but it still sounds great. I think they sampled the section with all the background noise. Why do you think Todd left that bare one out there? Actually including the crowd noise makes the record that much more intense. They even went after Todd's drum sound, which was equally important in the making of "that" record. There is a talent to stealing from other records. You have to know what to do with the samples. This one is well stolen.

"I'm For Real": this one sounds like it comes from somewhere East Of Africa. The dry drums are a little annoying, but the backwards snare sounds great, and I love the way the guy sample interrupts the girl sample.

"Trippin'": I'm not sure what drug they intended to go along with this song. Not to be played when you feel that slight headache coming on. It sounds like what the Gerkin Jerks were doing in 1990.

"Yea C'mon'": I wanted to hear the 'I've fallen and I can't get up' sample in this one.

— Scott Free

**Margareth Menezes
Elegibo**

Mango CD/CS

The sister who stole the show on David Byrne's "Rei Momo" tour sets it out solo. From Bahia to Bob Marley via James Brown, this is real roots and up-to-date urban stylee with a difference. Sisters got the pipes and the spirit(s). Killer cuts: "Marmelada" and "Elegibo (a story of IFA)"

— Roger Noel

**Armondo presents
Mike Dearborn
1991/
New Dimension/
Sexual X-perience**

Muzique Records 12"

I feel sorry for Mike. On the label, the "presenter's" name, Armondo is in huge bold letters and then underneath, almost as an afterthought, is the artist's. Well Mike, maybe after this record you'll be qualified for "bold caps" status.

The record is solid (musically, that is) and fits in well with Muzique's last smash, "The After-life," by Ron Trent. It looks like Armondo is on his way to creating a "Muzique sound." The two songs on the the first side, "1991" and "New Dimension" are long and drawn out, but I wouldn't call it monotonous. The choice of sounds and the simple, melodic lines make it very listenable. Personally, I took a shower to this record, but you could dance to it.

Side B has two versions of a song called Sexual X-perience. When a song is an instrumental, you can pretty much name it whatever you want. It has that Detroit techno feel to it, and the excellent drum programming keeps it interesting.

— Scott Free

**Aster Awake
Aster**

Sony CD/CS

The ones to Aretha, Anita, and Janis even more so. From the land where womankind was born via chocolate city, Aster's a star. Take her on her own terms. You won't regret it.

— Roger Noel

**Rythm Warfare
2 Notches**

Strictly Rhythm Records 12"

Unfortunately, a timely name for a group. The funk drums do have that scud feeling to them. A barrage of samples with attacking monophonic synths, and a bass line that slides in and out of enemy territory. Very intense, but I'm one of those peacenick types— I don't need four mixes of it.

— Scott Free

**Smoove-Jam
Work The Rythm/
Syndromatic/
Tonight**

Smoove-Jam Records 12"

The group and the label are the same name. Could cause some confusion if the group signed to another label. The first song, "Work The Rythm," mixes hip-house beats with samples of old Chicago house records and dense, jazz-sounding female vocals. It also has a mini hip-house rap à la 2 In A Room. The dub mix has a de-mmented violin part that makes the mix—actually it makes the record. The work of a truly disturbed man. Very mixable, very fun.

On the B-side is "Syndromatic," a wonderfully eerie techno track that is miles above anything coming out of wherever records come out of these days. Lots of incredible sounds floating out of the back of the mix. Very well produced. The kind of record I wish I had done.

Last is "Tonight," an oh-so-retro track that is just too, too disco. Deep Rhodes piano, whispering female, violins, congas. One mirrored ball, please.

This record is very well thought out, constructed, and produced. It should make Eric Miller and Jere McAllister very famous. I don't know Eric, but I gave Jere a ride to the studio in my car once. I won't wash my car for a week.

— Scott Free

**2nd Avenew
It's the New**

Alleviated Records 12"

Don't you feel like you get to know someone better with each record they release? Well just when we were all getting concerned about Larry Heard's Moodiness (C'mon Lar-snap out of it), here comes 2nd Avenue, a fun escapade (have I resorted to quoting Janet Jackson?) into discoland, that is pure fun. Congas float in and out of the beat. Little synths drop in to say "hi." Then we get a spoken intro that means serious music ahead. We even get a retro rap—kinda Sugarhill. And a female vocalist that is a "true delight." What more could you ask for? Ain't it funky, love?

— Scott Free

**Dee Dee Brave
My My Lover**

Movin' Records 12"

Another great product from Movin' records. After "Let the Rain Come Down", which headed my top 15 chart for many weeks, and Valerie Ingram's "Are You Faithful", which also made it to number one and is still being heard around town, excellence still radiates from this small New Jersey label. This is a very strong track (hard drums and heavy bass—like most records with the "Jersey Sound"), the kind of track that demands to be danced to. On top of this track is a very melodious tune which is, in its own right, captivating.

This piece comes equipped with 4 mixes. My favorites are the "KOOS Again Mix" which consists of well done ad-libbing. David Camacho's mix is instrumental but more musical. This formula equates to yet another winner.

— Lee Collins

musical 123456 LISTS

Larry Heard Producer

Top Ten

1. Jump and Prance

Dreamhouse *White House*

2. Into the Night UBQ

Project House *Effect*

3. Drink on Me Teulé

Profile

4. Unification E Culture

Strictly *Rhythm*

5. Jazz it Up CFM Band

Underworld

6. Luv Dancin' The

Underground Solution *Strictly*

Rhythm

7. Moments in

House Essence *Strictly*

Rhythm

8. Across 110th St.

El Barrio *Fresh*

9. Scandal Ultra Naté

Eternal/Warner Brothers

10. It's Not Far

Away Scott Taylor *Beat*

Notables of 1990

1. Koro Koro No Smoke

Profile

2. You're Walking

Electrify 101 *Mercury*

3. Transcendental

Love Project 1 *Tam Tam*

4. Change Baby Ford Sire

5. What is Love Deee-

Lite *Elektra*

6. Searchin' 33 1/3

Queen *NuGroove*

7. Love So Special-

Cebil *Atlantic*

André Halmon

Dance

Specialist

Club America 25

1. I'm Attracted To

You Anna Robinson *Smash*

2. One Step At A

Time Jay Williams *Big Beat*

3. Into The Night

UBQ Project House *N Effect*

4. All True Man

Alexander O'Neal *Tabu*

5. Love Come Down

Eve Gallagher *MP-U.K.*

6. Keep It Up

(Vocal) L.U.P.O. Yo Bro-*U.K.*

7. Don't Cha Want

It K-Alexi *Underground*

8. Loose Flutes Picture

Perfect *Big Productions*

9. Got A Love For

You(Remix) Jomanda *Big*

Beat

10. Let's Push It

Innocence *Chrysalis-U.K.*

11. It's The New 2nd

Avenew *Alleviated*

12. Dark Secret

(RnB) David Rudder *Sire*

13. You+Me Keytronics

Irma-*Italy*

14. Can't Give You

Up Life On Earth *Republic-U.K.*

15. We Are Unity

Umosia *Otherside*

16. Temple Of Love

Harriet East West *America*

17. Fever Way To Go

Tommy *Boy*

18. Drink On Me

Teulé *Profile*

19. Scandal Ultra Naté

Eternal/Warner Brothers

20. Jump and

Prance

Dreamhouse *White House*

21. Play Thing

Phoenix *Big Beat*

22. Superficial

People(Remix)

Ten City *Atlantic*

23. Holding

On(Remix) Tickle House

Jam

24. Missing

You(Fabulous) Soul II

Soul *Virgin promo*

25. Blood Vibes/

Jump On It Master At

Work *Cutting*

Lee Collins *Rhythm*



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Section Productions

Top Fifteen

1. Open Your Heart

Barbara Tucker Fourth Floor

2. My My Lover Dee

Dee Brave Movin'

3. Mummy I'm Sick

Under Water Electribe

101 Mercury - import

4. Beaches Mr. Stone

Brothers Organization - import

5. Passion Mystique

Velvet City

6. Una Experience/

Whirlpool The Deepest

Area Right Area

7. That's When It's

Gold Be Big 10 - import

8. That Moon Paul

Rutherford Beat Farm

Recordings - import

9. Guaraana Love Bug

Experience Brothers Organisa-

tion - import

10. Where Love

Lives Allison Limmerick

Arista - import

11. Stay With You

Dubb Club Sleeping Bag -import

12. It's a Jungle

Out There Julian Jonah

Cooltempo/Chrysalis - import

13. Imagination

Shank *Sleeping Bag* -import

14. That's Kickin'

Me! Underground Posse

Brothers Organisation - import

15. Electribe

Memories Electribe 101

Mercury - import

Scott Free Producer

Top Ten Jazz

1. Impressions

Michael Camilo Sony

2. Warm Valley Paris

All-Stars A&M

3. No More Music

Revelation Ensemble

4. Pannonica

Thelonious Monk

5. Downstream Trout/

Rodby Columbia

6. Alone Together

Chet Baker

7. On The Trail Oscar

Peterson

8. Dance In the

Morning Dino Saluzzi

ECM

9. My Favorite Things

John Coltrane Atlantic

10. You Won't

Forget Me Shirley Horn

Verve

Steve Freshwater

Boys at Night

Top Fifteen

1. I Feel Love Fax

Yourself Sunshine

2. Crash (Emer-
gency Landing Mix)

TKA Tommy Boy

3. Power of Love

Deee-Lite Elektra

4. Heading for the

Night Electribe 101 Mercury

- import

5. Unbelievable
(BootLane Mix) EMF

EMI

6. Scandal Ultra Naté

Eternal/Warner Brothers

7. Drink On Me Tuelé

Profile

8. Is it Love Ultra Naté

Eternal/Warner Brothers

9. Electribe

Memories Electribe 101

Mercury - import

10. Passion Mystique

Velvet City

11. What is Sad-

ness Device Arista

12. One Nation

(Zimba Mix) Olu Rowe

Cardiac

13. Got a Love For

You Jomanda Big Beat

14. Hold You Tight

Tara Kemp Giant

15. Ska Train (Tied
To the Tracks Mix)

Beatmasters Rhythm King

Edward Crosby WGCI

Hot Music

1. Just A Touch

Essence Strictly Rythm

2. Scandal Ultra Naté

Eternal/Warner Brothers

3. Get Into The

Music DJ's Rule Hi-Bias

4. Night by Night

Alamda ID

5. Spread A Little

Love Richard Rodgers Sam

6. Don't Cha Want

It K-Alexi DJ International

7. All True Man

(Frankie Mix) Alexander

O'Neal Tabu

8. Raw, Love/Party

Time Pal Joey Loop D Loop

9. Don't Run Away

(4 On the Floor

Mix) Denise M. House Jam

10. Superficial

People Ten City Atlantic

11. Feel It Adonte

Republic - import

12. One Of My

Moods/Pipe Dreams

DJ Delite Jazzy Records

13. Drink On Me

Tuelé Profile

14. More Love Tamara

Knight About Music

15. My My Lover Dee

Dee Brave Movin'

16. North on South

Sreet (Bobby

Konders Mix)

Herb Alpert A&M

17. Code 1,2,3,4

Jazzy Document NuGroove

18. One Step At a

Time Jay Williams Big Beat

19. Anthem (Remix)

N-Joi RCA

20. Nightlife Al Mack

Project Strictly Rhythm

21. Do It To the

Music Street Side Boyz

Burnin' House

22. Till We Meet

Again Inner City Virgin-

import

23. Your Love

Never Fails Agape

Sounds Red Heat

24. Seasons of

Love Keith Nunnaly Giant

25. Touch Me Baby

Static Strictly Rhythm



QuART

Call for entries for the first annual Invitational Gay Pride Queer Art (QuART) Show, scheduled for June 1991. The purpose of this exhibit is to demonstrate the cultural diversity of the Lesbian-Gay-Bisexual artists community and the range of concerns addressed in their work. People of color and women especially encouraged to participate. Send slides/resume/statement/SASE by April 15th. You will be notified by the first week of May. \$15 donation to Queer Nation/Chicago to help underwrite cost of show.*

QRhyme

Call for submissions, Poetry portfolio to be compiled in tandem with QuART Show. Send submissions (limit 5)/ resume/ statement /SASE by April 15th. You will be notified by first week of May; probable publication of anthology by June. \$15 donation to Queer Nation/ Chicago to help underwrite expenses.*

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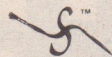
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Word has it that **Civillies and Cole** are looking for three humpy, multi-ethnic boys to form a singing trio à la **Seduction**, called **Erection... Candy J, Amanda Lear, Felly**, and **Katrin Quinol** are teaming up to cohost "Real Fish", where the world's leading gynecologists can win prizes by most correctly guessing the gender of today's music superstars... **Vanilla Ice** resents the rumours that have developed due to his stage name. He's been known to do light S&M occasionally... **Mariah Carey** has been pegged to star in the new remake of "Imitation of Life"...OUT IN THE WASH: Now it can be told; **Martha Wash** sang for everybody! She's talking with attorneys to receive compensation for her ghost vocals for **Aretha Franklin, Leontyne Price, Nana Mouskouri, Yma Sumac** and **Grace Jones**...Manhattan's **Amanda Lapore** has been approached to star in the "Dianne Brill Story," a mini-series for Fox...**Nancy Wilson's** daughter and **Esther Philip's** nieces have decided to do the black **Wilson Philips** act.

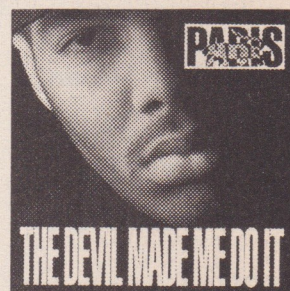
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Electric and brutal, Stetsasonic is back, with seventeen killer cuts. New single and video: "No B.S. Allowed."



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THING lists.

Famous Words

Fame costs, and right here is where you start payin'...in sweat

I wanna live forever — Debbie Allen

In the future, everyone will be famous for fifteen minutes. — Irene Cara

I'm a star so love me, Goddamn it — Andy Warhol

We'll call her "Vicki Vicki". That's "Vicki Vicki" — Leslie Rejane

The house of Extravaganza, the house of Dupree, who the hell are they? They're nobody, except when they're in that little ballroom. — "A Star Is Born" (1937)

Don't give up your day job — Willie Ninja

Everybody is a star — Traditional

Baby, I'm a star — Sylvester Stewart

You're a superstar/that's what you are/you know it — Prince

I'm a winner, baby! They love me, Mahogany! — Madonna

Look at all the fabulous people — Diana Ross in "Mahogany"

There's only one star in a Helen Lawson production and that's me, baby, Helen Lawson — Sylvester

...but I got a lot of publicity out of it. — Susan Hayward in "The Valley of the Dolls"

Sing out, Louise! — Betty Boo

— "Gypsy"

— "Gypsy"

— "Gypsy"

— "Gypsy"

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— "Gypsy"

One Good Time For The Captain

Captain Nemo
Cap'N Crunch
Captain Kangaroo
Captain Queeg
Captain May I
Captains Courageous
Captain and Tenille
Captain Fantastic
O Captain, My Captain
Captain Kirk
Captain Picard
Captain America
Captain Bligh
Captain Hook
Captain Howdy
Mon Capitaine
Captain Morgan
Captain EO
Captain Stubing
Captain Ahab
Captain Long John Silver
the Skipper, too

Had the ticket but missed the boat

Phyllis Hyman
Nona Hendryx
Teena Marie
Angela Bofil
Nancy Wilson
Millie Jackson
Pia Zadora
Irene Cara
Cheryl Lynn
Freda Payne

Can We Talk?

Marsha Warfield
Michael Musto
Whoopi Goldberg
André Braugher
Grace Jones
Marlon Riggs
Naomi Campbell
Veronica Webb
Kim Webb
Spike Lee
Keenen Ivory Wayans
Nelson George
RuPaul
George Wayne

"Kick It Girls"

Batgirl
Emma Peel
Two Tons O' Fun
Wilona Woods
Mary Wilson
Flo Ballard
Cindy Birdsong
Natasha Fatale
Super Girl
The Girl From U.N.C.L.E.
Jethrine
Miss Hathaway
Serena
Miss Money Penny
Ethel Mertz
Betty Rubble
Millie Helper
Tara King

Cry Uncle

Uncle Festus
Uncle Martin
Uncle Henry
Uncle Ernie
Uncle Tom
Uncle Bill
Uncle Sam
Uncle Authur
Uncle Milt
Uncle Remus
Uncle Charlie
Uncle Buck
The Man From U.N.C.L.E.
Aunt Jemima

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Shelby Webb Jr.
Sammy Davis
Alyson Bouldon
A. Strobe
Courtney B. Minor
David C. Cumberbatch

Po' Child

any Kennedy
any Sheen
any Barrymore
any Zappa
Liza Minnelli
Lorna Luft
Zowie Bowie
Chastity Bono
Kristy McNichol
CC Hunt
Tracie Spencer
Sinita
Cheri
Mario Van Peebles
Shari Belafonte
Melanie Griffith
Another Bad Creation
New Kids On the Block
Isabella Rosellini
Todd Bridges
Paloma Picasso
Claude Picasso
Little Gloria, happy at last
Carter Cooper
Edie Sedgwick
LaToya Jackson
Rodney Allen Rippy
Christian Brando
Christina Crawford
Kadeem Hardison
Tawnee Welch
Tiffany
Debbie Gibson
Brooke Shields
Neneh Cherry
Jane Fonda
Peter Fonda
Carrie Fischer
Wilson Philips
Jade Jagger
Nancy Sinatra
Baby Jane Hudson
Blanche Hudson
Rhoda (the bad seed)
Little Orphan Annie
Tiny Tim
Sweet Pea
Emanuel Lewis
Veda Pierce
Princess Yasmin Aga Khan
Princess Caroline
Princess Stephanie
Richie Daley
Emilio Estevez
Macaulay Culkin
Brooke Shields
Rae Dawn Chong
Banig
Raven Simone
Dana Plato
Kitten

John Bernard Jones' List of Un-Things

1. Poverty- Yours, mine, everyone else's.
2. Talk show topics- who invited this militant environmentalist ex-skinhead interracial adoptee to my party, anyway?
3. The Bold and the Beautiful- the soap opera and queens who think they are.
4. Gold- how many dead South Africans have you hung around your neck today?
5. EM Magazine- How many more is-sex-better-before-or-after-cum? articles can they write?
6. Convoluted geometric haircuts- If you didn't get it in school, having it cut in your head won't help now.
7. AIDS- the politically correct item to include, but I'm not wild about any disease to begin with.
8. Cigarettes, alcohol and drugs- Never tried them, never will. Three very real threats to Black men.
9. Dummies- If your trade thinks S&L crisis involves a shortage of whips, spank him and trade him in.
10. The Disney Corporation- And you thought you had to worry about the Japanese!

Litter-a-ture

I Know Why the Catty Queen Reads
Nightwood
Moby Dick
Tale of Two Titties
Myra Breckenridge
My Life As a Man
Querelle

WHAT IS CELEBRITY?

When one asks who's who, what one really may be asking is why? Sometimes celebrity comes as a birth right, as is the case with certain royalty (or Tatum O'Neal, Mario Van Peebles, Shari Belafonte, Jenny Lumet, et al.). Are Claus Von Bulow or Bess Myerson 'celebrated'? Never mind, Sukreet Gable is. Celebrated people, these days, happen to be any and everybody celebrating or being celebrated for anything. Imagine Mrs. Fletcher careening from the heavens, landing at just the right time and place even though she's "...fallen and can't get up." If there's room for a 'galaxy' of stars, we can safely assume that somewhere between Rachel Ward and "Screamin'" Rachel Cain lies a whole strata of, er, heavenly bodies all twinkling at varying intensities. Acts like Milli Vanilli and Black Box suggests that so-called talent is optional or at least of questionable merit. Take a hint from John Waters. Nowadays, if celebrity implies elitism it also happens as something self-created or homegrown. New media stars and personalities are manufactured as quickly as you can say Pia Zadora. Besides, with half a mind, a typewriter, and a xerox copier, one can create one's own media stars. Hell, *you* can be the star! Fortunately, persons within the marginal communities, like women and gays and lesbians, are empowering themselves, armed with camcorders and at-home presses — creating, collecting and disseminating art and information that's crucial to their survival. The flow of ideas and real progress eventually define who gets to be noted or renowned for anything — be they infamously fraudulent or the famed real thing.

Attack of the 50 foot woman:

Vaginal Creme Davis

by Steve Lafreniere



Blacktress Vaginal Davis, photographed by Bimbox publisher Johnny Monzema, out lunching at Troy in L.A.

What would the homocore movement of underground gay zines be without that wondrous bible of libel, *Fertile Latoyah Jackson Magazine*? Edited by Hollywood's famed performance queenpin/blacktress Vaginal Creme Davis, *Fertile Latoyah Jackson Magazine* is an hilarious account of the very hot days and nights of Vag and her cohorts the Afro Sisters, a multiracial, maxigenderal gang of "talented persons." The only way to describe *Fertile Latoyah Jackson Magazine* to someone is to show it to them. Ditto Miss Davis, who, as member of three musical acts (The Afro Sisters, Cholita, and Pedro Muriel and Esther) and sought-after mistress of ceremonies (Fuck Club, Café Hag, Sissy Club USA, Sit and Spin and sundry other Sin Bros. events) is one of the Los Angelenos currently slapping that city awake to a new decade. Let's all pray the goddess that a 6-foot-6, occasionally platinum-blonde, African-American drag queen becomes one of the archetypes of the '90s.

Steve Lafreniere: Would you consider the Afro Sisters a musical act?

Vaginal Davis: Well, the Afro Sisters sing *a capella*, original songs that I write, to a recorded musical backing track. When the Afro Sisters started, around...I don't know, '83, '84...we were purely *a capella*. And we'd go into a kind of rap banter, and then into me doing a little spiel telling everybody where I'm comin' from. Then I'd go into reading my poetry and whatnot.

SL: Oh you're a poet too? I've never seen any poetry in *Fertile La Toyah Jackson Magazine*.

VD: I do my poetry separately. I may print some of my poetry in the upcoming issue. It'll probably be our "Literary Issue." When we started off, it was me and two biological females. Vaginal Davis and the Afro Sisters, Urethra Franklin and Clitoris Turner. Clitoris Turner was going through some problems with a junkie boyfriend, the usual punk rock problems. She tried to commit suicide, and her family came out and got her. She was really a great Afro Sister, she had an amazing voice. When it came time to replace her I decided to use a boy instead of a girl. A white male. And then I used another white female, and made her Cherry Jefferson. When we got onstage no one could really tell which ones were drag queens, and which ones were the real girls. And I like that, I like keeping people guessing. I mean, I'd get on stage and people would even speculate as to whether I was a boy or a girl. Which I think is ludicrous, because first of all I'm 6-foot-6. I've been described as being part Harlem Globetrotter and part beautiful black Amazon. So, for someone to be in limbo as to whether I'm a boy or a girl, no matter how perfect my makeup looks, they're a little off. But I guess under the lights and stuff, any illusion is possible!

SL: Have you found happiness?

VD: Well, honey...there's no way....I don't consider myself an actor, and I don't consider myself a singer even though I sing, and I have acted in underground things and above-

ground things. And I really don't consider myself a performance artist, although I'm lumped into the category. Perform-

ance art...what is that? I mean, people want everything figured out for them.

SL: I read where you recently mc'd a big Sin Bros. event in L.A.

VD: Mmmmm-hmm, it was an event for ACT UP. We raised, oh God, about 17 or 18 thousand dollars, and it was like 1500 people. It was one of the first events that brought together the funky homos and the old school homos. All the really mainstream homos were there checking us out, like, "What is this with these homos with tattoos and piercings, and the shaved heads and the drag queens? What are these people that we never talk to...what are they *doing*?" The monied homo crowd, the so-called politically correct crowd, the ones who have that showy display of their means. They're fascinated by the new breed. But they don't approve of us, and they wonder why we get so much attention! It's funny because I've been written up in so many magazines lately, like the *Advocate*. Years ago the *Advocate* would have never done anything on me. It hasn't come out yet, I just took the photo for it Saturday. They wanted to see the *FLJM* staff in their office.

SL: So would I.

VD: I went out to the UCLA campus, and found an office, and we just invaded. Used their computers and their whole office area. We brought two half-naked boys, stuck them on a desk and made them mock fuck. We were all dressed like secretaries, so while the drag queens are all busy at the typewriters and the computers and the fax machine, the naked, cute boys are on the desk fucking!

SL: Where do you put together *FLJM*? In your apartment?

VD: More or less. Wherever people donate space for me. Urethra Franklin, she owns a punk rock boutique on Melrose Avenue called Retail Slut. And she has a xerox machine. She bought herself a xerox machine to make her catalogue. Basically, the magazine was an offshoot of the Afro Sisters' performances, because whenever we do a performance I like to give something to my audience. To explain that better I have to go back in time a little. The boys and girls version of the Afro Sisters was about '85, '86, when *Interview* magazine did a piece about us.

SL: I think I remember that.

VD: It was when Andy Warhol was still alive. We were in the segment "New in Los Angeles." I'm in the string bikini. Later, when I played in New York at the Pyramid, all these queens said they cut that picture out and had it up in their dressing rooms. And that really makes a girl feel good.

SL: Have you ever at Wigstock?

VD: No, I've never performed there. I've talked to Lady Bunny about her doing a version of Wigstock on the west coast, though.

SL: At a speedway.

VD: I would like it to be kind of like a California Jam. In a park in Hollywood! But we want it to be huge. Bunny and I performed at a benefit in June in San Francisco at the AIDS conference. It was at a club called Colossus. They had drag queens from all over. They had DeAundra Peak from Atlanta, and me and Glen Meadmore and Chanda Lear and Jomala represented LA. The drag rock band Chastity from San Francisco. And Lady Bunny representing New York. And Lurleen, she came out from Atlanta. It was a benefit for ACT UP, and there were tons of people. I even got to see Lady Bunny not in drag. We both went to the Church of Phallic Worship. And honey, we went for communion! And we both had ourselves a really good time because, honeeeeey, those San Francisco boys are frisky! And they enjoy us queens!

SL: You go to a lot of celebrity parties that don't even make it to the magazine, right?

VD: Oh yeah. A lot I don't write about because they're so boring. People think that the entertainment industry here in Los Angeles, that it's all so glamorous and exciting, and in the long run people in the entertainment industry are very middle class. Their aspirations are real, y'know...having nice things. That's about it. They're quite boring. That's why the movies and music that you hear on the radio is so dull, because these people don't know anything about art, and they have not one creative bone in their bodies. They pay us weird people, like drag queens, to come to their dumb parties just to liven them up!

SL: Out of all those people, you have to have some favorites.

VD: The thing is, we...the drag queens and whatnot who get invited to these things...we rate them according to the food spread, and the liquor. If it's a good food spread...a lot of us girlies out here are vegetarians...if they have a large selection for vegetarians, that's how we rate a lot of the parties. And how good the liquor is, y'know, whether it's just beer and wine or mixed drinks. Things like that.

SL: In the last issue, there was a steamy encounter between you and Anthony of the Red Hot Chili Peppers. Did that actually, umm...occur?

VD: Honeeeeey, Anthony went to the same junior high school as my Afro Sister Fertile. They went to Bancroft Junior High School. And before Anthony was a Red Hot Chili Pepper, he was just a punk kid.

SL: Are you originally from Los Angeles?

VD: Honey! I was born in Watts. You know, the Watts riots?

SL: I know Watts.

VD: A lot of these people were more or less street kids. Like

Flea, he was in porno magazines posing, because he has a really big wiener. He was a male prostitute.

SL: But he's straight, right?

VD: Well, he's married now and he has a kid, but what does that mean? It doesn't mean very much. Before he was in the Red Hot Chili Peppers, he was in a band called Fear. With Lee Ving and Derf Scratch.

SL: Do you know Dennis Cooper?

VD: Oh yeah, Dennis Cooper just moved back here after living in New York. Miss Cooper is back in LA now. He just did a piece in L.A. Weekly talking about Fertile Latoyah Jackson. He loves Fertile. In L.A. there's a lot going on now. With my friend who's a fashion stylist, we did a club last week called Café Hag. It's a thing we do about once a month where we convert this little Czechoslovakian restaurant in Hollywood, we turn it into, like, Bricktop's, a little Paris speakeasy. You get a buffet dinner and then nonstop performers doing 1920s music. A lot of people that performed are out of the punk scene, and here they were singing songs from the 1920s. Somewhat cabaret style, but also New Orleans style. I was dressed real Louise Brooks and singing songs like "Muddy Water," and doing the Shimmy and the Black Bottom.

SL: It sounds a little like the Cockettes in the late '60s. That's sort of a constant with drag queens, that 1920s period. In the '70s it got all fucked up once middle America picked up on it, and started wearing polyester baggies and Cork-Eez. But even that was kind of hilarious. Are you familiar with the Cockettes and their version of home-grown fantasy and perversity, or...

VD: Well, Sylvester was a Cockette.

SL: But do your ideas, the magazine, performances, etc., come out of that home-made ethos?

VD: The Afro Sisters and Fertile Latoyah Jackson's performances and videos come out of the fact that there are a group of talented and creative people here in the city who create their OWN outlets; who have their own audience, their own support system. We can't just go into a studio and make a deal and make a movie...so we make our OWN movies. And we distribute them through an underground network so that people find out about us. And honey, the weird thing about it is that now, I go out and do my own films on little...video. And word gets out and...I just got offered to do a play! It was a stupid play and I turned it down because the part was really lame, but the reason I got offered this was not because I went knocking on doors and went on interviews. It was because of my magazine, because of the videos. I'd been seen on a cable show called "Decoupage," AND THEY CAME TO ME! You've got to make those things for yourself first, by doing it as cheaply as possible with whatever resources you've got. You've got to do it

yourself. And not even THINK about what you're doing, just have a good time, have fun, and doing YOUR SHIT. And get it out there, and then those other stupid people, if they're interested...fine. But you don't even worry about that.

SL: Do you think this determined attitude of yours, which is currently paying off in at least the fame department, is that something that poor white and poor black queens share? From not ever having a lot, so your expectations aren't as easily... disappointed?

VD: I remember the first time we played in front of a really large audience. Since a majority of the Afro Sisters are white, in the guise of black people, they were saying, "Oh God, they're gonna lynch us! Here we are in afros, they're gonna think we're making fun of black people!" I said, "Don't worry about it, it'll be cool. They'll realize where we're coming from." And we went out there and we performed in front of all these black people, and, honey, they wanted my magazine...they were just saying, "That was hot!" And these were straight black people. At first they were like, "What is this?" They were, like, all angry. But once I got up there and started going into my thing, they could relate to it. Because it wasn't all stodgy and old school. It was quick and direct and to the point and it gave them a whole new look at a homosexual context. Of someone who's gay and black...and fearless in telling them, "Lookit, I'm gay, I'm black, I'm a drag queen, I'm dressed up and I'm shoutin' and yellin' and I'm a MILITANT!" You know? "I'll tell that white man!" And here I've got these white kids who are in my group, and they feel the same way too. They're feeling so strongly, they've taken on a black identity, not in jest, but because they identify with blackness. I would start the show off by walking up to the mike saying, "I'm black and I'm very, very proud." It always got a big laugh.

SL: I don't understand where Fertile comes in, though.

VD: Fertile came in a little bit down the line, later. Not until '87, early '88. Urethra Franklin every year would take her little European vacation. So one year she went on vacation, and I had a friend who is El Salvadoran take her place, and he became Urethra Franklin. He was so funny and original portraying her, I wanted him to stay in the group. So I had to create a new character for him, the character of Fertile Latoyah Jackson. Always pregnant, always giving birth, sort of a mother figure, icon. His character became the most popular character. That's why she's the perennial cover girl, she's on the cover of every issue of the magazine. Because...you've seen the picture of her, look at that face! It says enough right there! What do you get when you see that face?

SL: What do you mean?

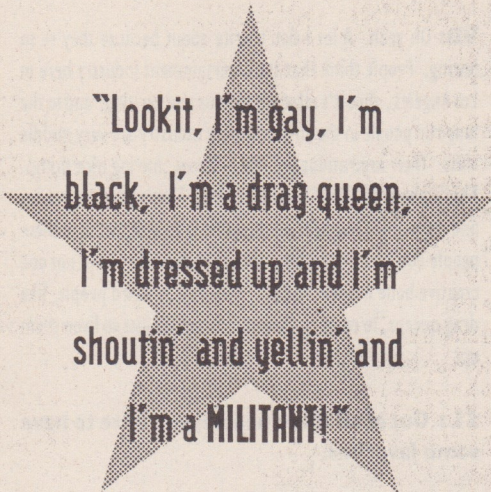
VD: Well, you have to admit, that's a different kind of face. Hoooooney, it's spelled out right there! The image of that face

and what it conjures up, all these maternal feelings, the madonna....A lot of people think Fertile is a real woman. But, then a lot of white people are so one-sided, when they see a bunch of white people dressed up in "black" clothes and what-not, they think they ARE black.

SL: The magazine is so well dreamt up. It's got this consistency, and what's great is how you can't even tell what's true and what's not. It's full of lies, but who cares?

VD: Well, yeah that's the point, y' know? But I do use a lot of pseudonyms in there because I'm always creating...I'm like Sybil, honey. I've got more faces than "The Three Faces of Eve." I've got all these personalities revolving through me.

SL: So you've been doing this your whole life?



"Lookit, I'm gay, I'm black, I'm a drag queen, I'm dressed up and I'm shoutin' and yellin' and I'm a MILITANT!"

VD: When I started school it was in the MGM program. For mentally gifted minors. The learning was very accelerated. But since I didn't fit the stereotype of a mentally gifted minor, a lot of the white teachers that I had saw me as a problem. I would question things that children didn't question. I was always argumentative, always challenging them, because I had this innate desire to learn. Because I think the education system in this country sucks! It really...sucks! And they were always calling my mother down, and they were saying that I was causing problems. You know? This was the rhetoric I got from grade one to high school.

SL: Plus it's a racist system.

VD: Oh definitely. Two of my Afro Sisters, Fertile, who is El Salvadoran, and Pussy Washington, who is Mexican, both are elementary school teachers. That's Fertile's day job! Both of them teach kindergarten and first grade. And the school board is so fucked it makes me and them very angry. They're so tied up in their fucking bureaucracy that they won't let good

teachers teach. In L.A. there's a lot of Spanish-speaking kids, but they want to rule out bi-lingualism, and that's the only thing that helps these kids learn. Both Fertile and Pussy work in the communities that they came out of, and they're giving back to their communities.

SL: Pussy Washington is a great name.

VD: Her real name is Alice Bag. She was in one of the seminal L.A. punk bands, the Bags. And she's also in my band Cholita, an offshoot of the Afro Sisters. We're like the female Menudo. We just played a new club here called Sissy Club USA, and she and I collaborated on some original material. Before, we just lip-synched obscure latin pop records. Our new songs in Spanish are really funny.

SL: Are you going to get all this stuff out on record?

VD: Well, my speed-metal thrash band (*Pedro Muriel & Esther -ed.*), we're gonna do a record on America Records.

SL: Do you know the artist Mike Kelley?

VD: Oh, yeah, he's the one who does the little felt thing. He's so funny! He had a showing at a gallery here on gallery row, La Cienega Boulevard, and, like, it would be this piece of dirty felt, stuck with a thumb tack on the wall! And it'll be like \$12,000! It's so funny!

SL: He's got a band with Raymond Pettibon.

VD: Oh I know Raymond Pettibon! I think the band is called Raymond Pettibon's Supersession. I think they just did a show.

SL: To end with, my friend Wendy wanted me to ask you this one. What does the phrase, "Fear of a Female Planet" mean to you?

VD: Well, I think the powers that be, the great white corporate structures, they're afraid of the feminine. But, honey, they should just relax and let loose, because there's a lot of power in femininity. The only way for this planet to survive is to not neglect the feminine portions of our personalities, but to revere them and to work with them. Empathy and love and trust. It sounds really simplistic doesn't it?

SL: No it doesn't. It sounds really difficult.

VD: Mmmmmmm—Hmmmmmm. ☺

Fertile LaToyah Jackson Magazine is available by mail. Write: 7850 Sunset Boulevard, penthouse suite 110, Los Angeles, CA 90046

Obscure Objects of Desire

Dennis Cooper & Gary Indiana

by Kathryn Hixson

On the occasion of the Grove Press 1989 publication of Gary Indiana's *Horse Crazy* and Dennis Cooper's *Closer*, the two intrepid auteurs scrambled around the country on what could ostensibly be considered a book tour. Alighting in lecture halls, performance spaces, and bookstores, the wearied duo gave provocative readings of excerpts from their fictive texts, and unabashedly exhorted audiences to join the swelling ranks of proud and enlightened owners of their significant tomes.

Though passed over by the plebian likes of Donahue and Oprah, Indiana and Cooper were besieged by a trickle of stampeding members of the press, eager to delve deep within the peculiar psyches of these formidable writers. After a stint at Randolph Street Gallery, one of Chicago's premiere not-for-profit performance venues, art critic Kathryn Hixson, employing a bribe of dinner at a modest Italian restaurant, queried the writers on their new work in the context of a hot-house homosexual culture, and within a somewhat cooler mainstream literary society. Effectively exploiting their expertise, Hixson also grilled them on issues close to her heart: objectification of the body in sex and pornography, and the tenuous connections between pleasure and desire.

Kathryn Hixson: Is your work gay literature?

Dennis Cooper: Gay literature is a useless term. It's only useful marketing wise—the gay community supports its writers. There's these bookstores that stock the book, publications that review the book—which is great. Heterosexuals don't tend to get that. But my work is not about homosexuality at all, it's completely relative. It's useless in that sense. I mean Genet and Burroughs...are they gay writers? Is Bataille a heterosexual writer? It's not about that at all. It's not about homosexuality except that it's something that puts you outside of culture, which is where everyone should want to be anyway.

KH: It puts you on the outside of culture?

DC: It gives you a vantage point, so you don't have to participate in the same way, in the way society is set up. I mean the rules are set up for people who want to be happy and make a lot of money and have two kids and blah blah blah. If you don't want that—if you're gay or not gay, really, you don't have to play that game—you can observe it. Homosexuals, all minorities, are excluded from being involved in the process, so you work the margins where everything great always happens anyway.

KH: You're saying that you're marginal and taking the outsider stance, but the writing is saying that you're not.

DC: Well, our writing is not about gay society, gay ritual or thinking about what it means to be homosexual. Who cares?

Gary Indiana: It's not about coming out of the closet.

DC: It's about things that everybody's... fear of the Other, or obsession—things that everybody can relate to. People who are interested in our work are not just gay people. Most gay people are not interested in our work at all. There are some weirdo gay people who are interested. I've been publishing for a long time and I've gotten attacked all the time by the gay press, because they say my work is not politically correct: I shouldn't represent homosexual people as murderers, homosexuals should be represented as good upstanding people or this and that. That's bullshit! This is the first time I've gotten really good reviews in the gay press.

KH: Why do you think that is?

DC: There's a hunger out there for gay writing that isn't total druck.

GI: There are plenty of self-defined gay novelists who write from the perspective of extreme, white, middle class privilege; who explore the very banal neuroticisms of people coming from that class, with the goals and ambitions of that class, which is assimilationist in a way I would never want to be. But that's not to say it has anything to do with being gay or not being gay, because if I had written a book about a man and a woman, people would be comparing it to *Lolita* or something. The

more conservative reviews in the trades say, "Despite the very specific sexual preferences of the main characters, this has universal appeal." It's ludicrous. It's just people, that's all.

DC: It's much more about being united with people that aren't officially sanctioned—blacks or women...

GI: You notice that we always have to define ourselves. Something that a woman does is always defined as something done by a woman, or a black or a gay. Heterosexual white males do not ever have to define themselves. They operate from a presumption of supreme cultural power where all else is the Other. But in fact, to me, they're the Other. I was told, and you can print this, that *Elle* magazine wasn't going to review my book, or Dennis' because they'd already reviewed David Leavitt's novel, which was the fag novel for the year—they weren't going to do any more—they'd done their part.

KH: But your work is still about homosexual culture.

DC: Mine isn't. It's about isolated individuals.

GI: Mine isn't, because my audience in New York for years was the audience for my theatre plays, which was basically the art world, which is very heterogenous. And my column (for the *Village Voice*) was not for a coterie audience, it was a mass audience. I don't feel like I'm specifically writing for other gay people, I'm writing for people like me. I know women that are like me, I know black people that are like me, gay people, and I know some straight guys that are like me.

DC: My concerns are much closer to, like, Sonic Youth. That's really where I come from. It's never been homosexual-specific. The characters are really isolated people. They talk about being gay occasionally, but it's not a central concern to them.

GI: I'm much more interested in defining the fact that writers like us are characterized by a sense of rebelliousness, and of telling unpleasant truths about thing, or just the truth about things, in the same way as an artist like Barbara Krueger—any number of other people do. The AIDS stuff, for instance, is another example of people's notion of politics. There is such a thing as realpolitik: things you have to do in the public sphere to get support for things or to make certain things happen which involves a certain amount of lying, or a certain amount of oversimplification.

But you're writing a piece of fiction and you're writing about real emotions, not the phony ones that people say to each other at funerals. You have to deal with your own fear of mortality, rather than pretending that you are this completely altruistic, idealistic person who suffers the loss of the other for their sake, rather than your own sake. I thought it was sort of important to get at certain issues that are not being dealt with in all of the AIDS literature. I'm not saying that I am trying to do anything extensive, but just to put it down the way that it happens, like during the time that I experienced it, and how the people I'm writing about feel about it, rather than the correct political sentiments they may say in public in a situation where

they're trying to raise money. The thing in Dennis' book about assholes, that complete objectification of something, how you were saying the other day, how much easier it is to look at an asshole than a face because you have to read so much information into a face and it's so complicated. But everybody, no matter what their orientation, goes through some process of objectification like that with their sexual partners at one time or another, or maybe all of the time.

KH: Is objectification a necessary part of sex?

DC: I think it should be fought, but I don't know—on the other hand, sex is much sexier when you are objectifying the other person.

KH: Why is that?

DC: I don't know! That's what is curious about it. I don't think people ever really connect in the way that you are led to believe people connect. I don't believe that souls intertwine, I don't believe it. I believe that we are totally isolated and that we desperately want to connect with each other and we do the best we can, but the idea that you merge with another human being is a lie. To me, it implies a belief in a higher god or something and I just don't believe that stuff.

GI: I believe that most people spend half their lives dumping the emotions that they think they should have, and dumping a lot of false consciousness. My book is about getting rid of a certain kind of obsessive fixé on another person, which is like total objectification, projection on a scrim, or what you want. You can take anybody and do it. There was a time in my life when I could look over there, see somebody, end up following them down the street, and spending a year of my life being insane about them. Everybody I know has done that, and those are false emotions, because you don't know that other person well enough to...

DC: When I was teenager, I was always suicidal and I would always put on Leonard Cohen's *Songs Of Love and Hate*. I would want it to give me the courage to kill myself, because it was all about that stuff. I think that is really common, and if not pop music, then something else—television.

GI: One area where gay culture does deserve some credit is like the demystification of Hollywood movies through the analysis of subtext, especially a camp subtext. In movies you can see much more how the machinery of sentiment is assembled. I feel that human beings all have essentially the same needs, and feelings and they are very simple feelings.

KH: What are they?

GI: The need to be nurtured, to be cared for...

DC: Security...

GI: Security. There's a classical range of feelings that every-

body has. The trouble is that they are contradictory feelings because as children everyone has wishes. We are all creatures of wishes, and everybody does have a utopian longing. We want our parents to live forever, and at the same time we want them to be dead when we don't want them around. We are completely contradictory in our emotional life, because what we want are our wishes - which are utopian and unfulfillable - and so those get channelled into areas of culturally overdetermined plausibilities - you will fall in love with a suitable person, you will have children, you will do this, you will do that, you will have a happy life. There are all of these formulas that have to do with love and the correct channelling of negative feelings. Culture is a big factory for that use of emotions. There's also a state control of emotional life. You are always defined in a group, in a nation, in a country, you have these antagonists, these are your enemies - these are your allies. Then it breaks down into ethnic groups and special interest groups. You have to hate this one because they are not you - Everybody defines themselves in terms of the other, that's other I'm me. And the state makes use of it. For example television, the voice of the state, constant prescriptions of how to apply your emotions to everyday life. In the totally crude, barbaric TV culture, all resolution of conflict is through the model of the nuclear family. All social conflict is resolved by dividing social problems into criminals and the power of the state - the police and the criminal, and all social problems are resolved in the heart of the nuclear family. The family is the place where all conflicts between people can be resolved, and on the political level, conflicts can be resolved through the justice system and the punishment of criminals.

KH: Give me more.

DC: That's the way they want you to be, but you have to take an anarchical position. You have to really trust yourself. Trust what your eyes see. I mean you're constantly being told that people are not like you, the Russians, the blacks, straights and gays are different. The fact is that that we all have exactly the same needs. In *Closer*, George lets these things go on because he understands that Philipe is, like, fucked up and he needs to fuck some kid over, and he's like, "Ok, I understand this, I understand what's going on," and they all know that they're all fucked up and that's why it's like a sealed world and he's just like, "Yeah, ok. He needs to fuck somebody over."

KH: He'll be the victim

DC: Yeah, whatever... He doesn't care, or he feels this will fulfill his destiny. Or, I don't know why. You know, it's like a murderer, anybody can relate to a murderer. You don't do it, you don't have to do it to understand what it's about. It comes out of feelings that all of us possess. And fear. It's so important to understand that, but television, all those things are telling

us not to feel that way.

KH: The other thing...

DC: Yeah, they're isolating us in the wrong way. They are isolating us so much, making us believe that we are all so different from each other. It's so crazy! It's not just America. It's in every country, virtually.

KH: Why do you think there's this dictation of sentiment, or channeling of emotion? Is it merely to sustain the status quo?

GI: Traditionally, every state has the ambition to control everybody. It's the nature of the state. They do it through a moral code. They join forces with religion. If you see the kind of hatefulness that's manufactured in this country, phobias that people... incredible, fundamentalist hatred of sexuality, hatred of the body, hatred of the autonomy of individual human beings. When you look at that hatred objectively, you see that it's an hysterical denial of childhood wishes and impulses of polymorphous perversity. Hysterical denial of some pleasurable experience they may have had with a child of their own sex or another sex. It comes out of a puritan hysteria.

DC: What is so disgusting is that the answer to everything is religion, you can't argue with God. You can present this argument, "Well but, well but." Then they say, "Well, God tells us this is wrong," and you can't change their minds. They have this ridiculous excuse. This moral majority stuff is so manipulative and evil. How can you argue with that? It's a way of not thinking. They follow these supposedly humanist rules which aren't humanist at all.

"I mean you're constantly being told that people are not like you, the Russians, the blacks, straights and gays are different. The fact is that that we all have exactly the same needs."

- Dennis Cooper

KH: The questions abortion raises.

DC: Absolutely. Sex is a really powerful thing.

KH: Right. Why is that?

DC: Because other people are the only thing there is. It's the most intense contact you will ever have.

KH: Is it the best way to communicate?

DC: I don't know if it's the best but you have no choice. You are drawn to physically connect, to couple with other bodies that you are attracted to. It's an overwhelming, uncontrollable urge that has nothing to do with intellectualism or logic or anything. You shouldn't deny that, you should explore that because it's so powerful. What's that about? I don't know. Nobody knows what it's about. It's so incredibly important, it's the center for it's the beginnings of love.

KH: What about pornography?

DC: It's really interesting.

KH: Why?

DC: Well, for me, it's a way to study sex....

KH: What does it have to do with sex?

DC: It has the same relationship to sex as photography has to life. It's a thing by which you see something you wouldn't normally be able to see. It's like putting sex so you can study it, it's like a textbook to me.

KH: Isn't it too staged to have any relationship to reality?

DC: It depends on the sex. I've seen pornography that's so staged that it's absolute without anything, and I've seen sex that is so full of intent and feeling and ideas that it's obviously something being done that enjoys having a camera on it. I study a lot of pornography, and it's obviously different from each other.

GI: There are lots of different kinds of pornography. I'm completely fascinated with pornography. Partly because it's become another cause that the right wing wants to stamp out, and to say that leads to all sorts of horrible things. I believe the classic old liberal line that it — pornography — makes sex more normal in a lot of ways. People being exposed to it does demystify the fact that people

do stick these things into holes in each others' bodies, and there's nothing so outrageously perverse or abnormal about it. Unlike Europe, where at least there's much greater sophistication about the fact that people do have sex. A lot of Americans are brought up believing that people have smooth plastic between their legs. I know that my parents spent their whole lives without ever openly discussing sexuality except in the most stunted and repressed and joking terms. Growing up in that kind of environment, I certainly had a reaction against it. Robert Mapplethorpe was a great pornographer. He just worked from the aesthetic of how can you make pornography

look better.

DC: For me, the stuff I've learned the most from is art or literature dealing with sex. Like deSade, everything you want to know about human nature is in his work. His entrance into that is through sex. It's like religion — ecstatic — the most ecstatic you'll ever be is having sex. What else is there?

KH: Why is it so ecstatic?

DC: Because you are connecting with other people and other people are the only interesting thing in the world — other people to be intimate and alone and to be the complete focus of another person and to have them as your focus is fantastic! There's nothing to compare to it.

KH: I'm trying to figure out this objectification thing.

DC: It's a toughie!

KH: Maybe I'm even obsessed with it.

DC: No, I don't care. It's an interesting issue. Some of it's just beyond our understanding.

KH: That's a cop-out.

DC: I don't think so at all. Do you think that intellectualism is the answer? I don't believe that's true. I don't believe that someone who has read all the books knows more than people that haven't read the books.

KH: Absolutely.

DC: There is instinct. There are all kinds of things that have nothing to do with ... you end up giving answers to things that aren't really answers, you're just willing to take an answer to have an answer.

KH: Just to get to the next minute?

DC: Right, we can never answer this question about objectification. Why do people do it? Who knows? We've been wondering ever since time began, or am I being ridiculous?

KH: That makes a lot of sense, but it's still problematic. It might be that I just have a...

DC: Bee in your bonnet. (Laughter) Well, are you straight?

KH: Yeah.

DC: Well, maybe it's a whole different thing because women are the victims of objectification in a whole different way than male homosexuals. Males, it's not the same thing.

KH: Really?

DC: Well, in my work, let's say if in *Closer* George were a girl, this would be a completely different book than it is now. Then, it would be about this woman who was a victim of a patriarchal system.

"I believe the classic old liberal line that it — pornography — makes sex more normal in a lot of ways. People being exposed to it does demystify the fact that people do stick these things into holes in each others' bodies, and there's nothing so outrageously perverse or abnormal about it." — Gary Indiana

KH: Well, maybe that's why it works.

DC: You mean that it isn't a woman? Absolutely, that's one of the tricks of the work.

KH: I don't want to be a victim of patriarchal systems, I'd much rather be a male homosexual. (Laughter)

DC: Yeah, that's one of the great things about it. And lesbianism, too, although I guess...

KH: It's different, it's much different.

DC: It's different? Yeah, I guess that's right.

KH: Being in the majority and being a minor-

ity at the same time, so you can be inside and outside at the same time. Be critical but still have the power.

DC: Women are the majority aren't they? It's not who's in the majority but who has the power. You may be the majority in South Africa but that doesn't mean you have power. When you are objectifying another man you are objectifying yourself, you're sleeping with someone who's like you. You probably have more of a sense of what they're going to feel when they

come. It's a whole different kind of thing. So when you objectify another guy it's partially about yourself. Our work would be very different if it were about women. If Gregory and George were women, it would be very different, I would never have written this book.

KH: That's pretty weird.

DC: It is weird.

KH: I wonder if a book like this could be written by a woman.

DC: A woman? Has anything like that happened?

KH: Not to my knowledge.

DC: Somebody ought to do that. There's a market there! Have you seen *Dancenoise*?

KH: No.

DC: Oh, they're really good. They deal with this subject - how women are represented in patriarchal society - but also they are just hysterically funny and I am a major fan of theirs. They're two heterosexual women.

KH: I'd heard differently.

DC: No, they are definitely. I just did a piece with Annie, and they are definitely heterosexual.

GI: You do so many things, Dennis.

DC: You do them too, you just do different things than I do.

GI: I just get more and more envious every day.

DC: Don't be envious of me, I suffer so terribly! (Laughs) You don't want to live in my head. Read my book - you don't

want to live in that head!

GI: You're so industrious.

DC: Yeah, I'm so industrious, so I won't have to feel anything. It's true, it's really true!

KH: Indifference and repression, what's the difference?

GI: Well, I've gotten to an age where I am extremely indifferent to more things than I ever dreamed possible.

KH: Is that good?

GI: Yeah, I think so - it's good to get rid of bad ways of feeling about things, or being overreactive to things. When you're young, you can't let go of anything. As you get a little older, you realize in 30 years you are going to be dead, you might as well get rid of as much crap as you can. I *would* love to be able to fall for somebody in a big way.

KH: You still want that, right?

GI: No, not really.

KH: Yeah you do.

GI: But it would probably generate some more material. I'm burned out on a million and one different kinds of people, it would be impossible for me to get rivetted.

DC: I'm always interested in the same kind of person, always have been — the George kind of character — really passive and unable to express himself and relying on other people. I feel so sympathetic, I get really moved by them. I want to give them all power, they have no power, and they want power so badly. The thing is that they don't know what to do with power. I have a history of being involved with people like that, because I get involved with them and I give them all power and I become this horrible mushy nothing and then they don't know what to do with it so they treat me like shit. It's not because they're mean, it's because they don't know what to do. If you give them all power, they've been fucked over so many times that they don't trust, can't possibly trust that you are giving this power to them. It's the kind of thing that just fascinates me. And they're usually very interesting people. A lot of it is in the gay world. Gay men are so terrible towards pretty boys, they just think they're idiots. Very similar to the way men are about women — beautiful women — they can't possibly think. Gay men do that a lot. That whole Edmund White generation of writers - which is really that way about people who are beautiful, people who are young. They can be exploited.

GI: Predatory.

DC: Being predatory. That's a problem with homosexuals.

GI: The problem in my book was to try to give it up to Gregory,

and to try to give some equality and try to find some equilibrium between them so that nobody would be exploiting anybody. But, of course, the problem is that Gregory has problems that can't be solved within this relationship so it all gets screwed up.

DC: But you get snagged in these things and you can't loosen yourself. It's so hard to free yourself from these situations, because you take on this responsibility, and if you were to drop this person, he'll have nothing because I've given him this power and he needs me, and if I take away that power he's just going to become more fucked up than before. It's a terrible thing.

KH: If desire and pleasure are so different, why do we spend so much time with desire?

GI: Because we are repressed and there isn't much opportunity for pleasure. We don't express it in a direct way. Culturally, it's so different from one place to another. Most places in America, if you make eye contact, they turn away immediately.

DC: In America, pleasure is a term that is usually applied to sex. When I hear the word pleasure I think immediately of floating around a swimming pool in a raft with suntan lotion on. I think of pleasure as being dull, like giving up and closing off your mind. People don't use the word leisure about sex. It's, like, leisure and pleasure.

GI: It's interesting that these things are so monadic in a way, with a family or with a couple or whatever. So much of what's cultural pleasure has been privatized with home video and so people don't go to the movie theatre anymore, sharing something with a whole room full of other people. They're doing something very private when they consume something. The way that these package tours and ocean liner cruises are advertised. I saw one with Bill Cosby the other day holding up pictures of his vacation and sort of sneering at his next door neighbor, "See what I'm doing while you're stuck back there!" And, "If your friends could see you now!" It's all about us vs. them. God forbid we should have anything in common.

DC: The good ol' competitive American spirit.

GI: We are smarter than you are so we get to go on this vacation or buy this car. I suppose that's the way that sexuality is transmogrified into advertising and consumption in the same way. It's about rub this special crap on yourself and you will be more alluring than the other person and on and on and on. We don't connect just sitting around having a conversation with pleasure, people don't connect in this culture — it's mediated through consumption.

DC: It's different in Europe. The bar thing: it's terrible because it's associated with alcohol, but people really meet after work in these pubs and talk and talk and talk and talk. It's too bad that it has to be lubricated by alcohol but...

GI: I'll have a beer.

DC: But they do that even in New York. Europe is oriented around communion much more than we are here.

KH: You have to go further.

DC: Excuse me?

KH: We have to go further.

DC: Than what?

KH: Than just critiquing American culture like that.

DC: I don't do it on purpose. I critique American culture because I don't think about it when I write. The critics write about it, these are products of America, blah blah blah. It's true, but it's not something I do on purpose.

KH: Are you writing from experience?

DC: My own ideas - the fact that the characters in my book use things like pornography and Disneyland and splatter films to mediate things that are painful to them could be seen as a critique of American culture, but it's not something I think about. I was fascinated by Disneyland when I was a kid and I really wanted to live in Disneyland, like George does, and I really thought that was the way the world was supposed to be. So it's really just a personal thing, my own disappointments, and my own anger. But I'm not like Gary, I'm not being a social critic when I'm writing these books.

GI: There are several passages in my book, maybe because I write for the *Village Voice*, they are interpreted as social commentary but what I really wanted to do is to get at what this character was like, that if he is not obsessed with Gregory, he's obsessed with writing, he's obsessed with how stupid everything is. I thought of it as a function of the character.

DC: I'd be a theorist if I knew why I did things. To me, it's about the lack of feeling emotions, physical feelings, about trying not to turn off to things. It's about trying to wake myself up or trying to make myself feel something. That's what it's about and in some sense that emotions are the truth, I don't know. More than a critique of American culture.

KH: But you are American culture.

DC: That's funny, somebody else just told me that the other day. So are you.

KH: I know.

GI: We are sort of in a producer relationship at this point.

DC: What was that William Carlos Williams line, the pure products of American culture go crazy? I do it because I want to support things and attack things, that's all. ☺

Lady Miss Kier

by Trent Adkins

The self-proclaimed "Mother of the Garden of Earthly Deee-Lite", Lady Miss Kier Kirby, was phoning from the East Village digs she shared with fellow band members Super DJ Dmitry and Jungle DJ Towa Towa. Since then, however, they've relocated to some other locale in New York City whilst whirling about on a World Tour. So far, they've played just about every major city here and abroad, the whole while managing to entertain and intrigue real party people because of the way they sound, look, and politic. Their subsequent visit to Chicago on November 1 at Shelter was both fabulous and a mess. The sound was pumpin' and what turned out to be a little crew on stage (Funkateers Latasha Natasha and Ronald, girlfriend on percussion) gave a marvelously "up" and too brief show. Very live. Alas, it was at Shelter. And, speaking of things famous for things and what constitutes celebrity, rumours were widely circulating that Miss Kier had overdosed on drugs à la Neely O'Hara and Edie Sedgwick. She was definitely too fabulous! Wasn't this the put down trend familiar with anything striving to be so positive or progressive? Should a musician and personality like Kier Kirby have to endure rumours of plastic surgery and dangerous liaisons? Quit! This is not the Judy Garland story. In the midst of continuing live dates and promotional appearances, Deee-Lite's close friends and management maintain that Miss Kier Kirby is just fine.

Trent Adkins: It's great to be talking to you. You mentioned that you were trying to schedule press and everything, has that been the downside of all of this attention recently?

Lady Miss Kier: Not really. I think the downside is turning stuff down. I mean there's just so many things that two years ago I would have done anything to do that I've had to turn down 'cause I don't have time now.

TA: It's been said that you seem more interested in talking to gay underground press or even the national gay press and not as excited about more mainstream press coverage.

LMK: Well, I'd rather read your magazine than *People* any day! I know you had a thing on the zines... and there's *Pansy Beat*. You know about that?

TA: Yeah, sure. We had copies of *Pansy Beat* around here thanks to a friend who's a subscriber. Actually, we've been in touch with them to do an exchange. I see *Pansy Beat* Editor, Michael Economy, is doing your illustrations for the album. I know a lot of people have really negative attitudes towards drag queens, seeing them as being difficult and catty many times. *Pansy Beat* sure is helping to dispel that image. I saw the Wigstock

footage and La Homa, Lady Bunny, and RuPaul seemed so sweet. I couldn't believe how nice and laid back they seemed, however glamorous. Will Deee-Lite keep playing Wigstock?

LMK: Yeah, definitely keep doin' Wigstock. Oh, RuPaul is the sweetest person in the whole world! Nobody nicer. Basically that's what Wigstock is all about... it's a day for love. Michael Economy basically is *Pansy Beat*. He does just about all the graphics for it.

TA: As well as most of the editing and stuff.

LMK: Yeah.

TA: They're really fun!

LMK: The guy on the cover has two horns. Do you have that one?

TA: don't think so. We had one with Lady Bunny on the cover and another one, like a Christmas Issue.

LMK: Oh right! I had an illustration in that issue, too.

TA: Did you really? I'll have to go and research that one. I probably saw it already and just

didn't pay much attention to it. I didn't know you then and probably thought it was just another drag queen; everybody's a Miss This and a Lady That. Have you been approached by *People*?

LMK: Yeah. Like we were in it two weeks ago. I can't really dish them, but it's not something I would put on my list to get in.

TA: Did you expect that they would contact you? I mean, pretty soon we should be seeing you in *Vogue* or....

LMK: We'll be in *Vogue*, the December issue of *Vogue*. I'm doing the cover of Italian *Vogue* with Steven Miesel. Yeah, that I'm excited about! Doing a fashion thing.

TA: Great! Congratulations!

LMK: I just had to turn down Thierry Mugler and Jean-Paul Gaultier to do their fashion shows...

TA: Because your schedule won't allow it?

LMK: Because we're starting this tour and they wanted to do it on Thursday and I have to leave on Saturday and it was just like too much. I don't want to be jet-lagged at the beginning of the tour.

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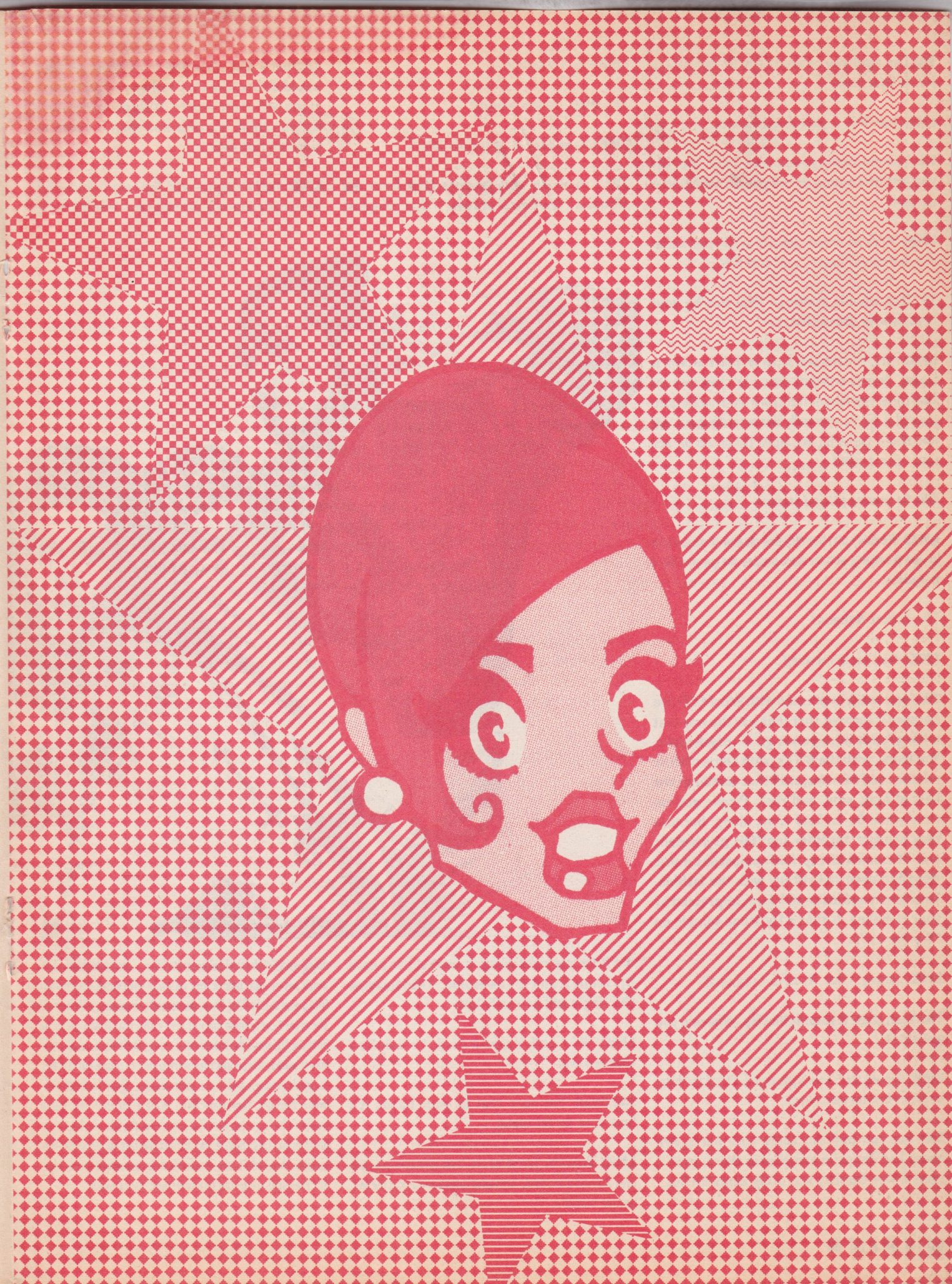
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TA: I've read you're doing five European cities. Is that true?

LMK: Yeah. Well, we played England already.

TA: You got really good press there, too. Did you just do London or did you do other cities as well?

LMK: We did Manchester. This time we'll be doin' Amsterdam, four cities in Germany, and I think Italy.

TA: That sounds exciting. Will this be your first time in these cities?

LMK: Well, I'd never been to Europe before we went to London. Dmitry's been there because he's from there and Towa's never been there, so that's really one of the best parts about all of this. I'd never really been out of the states... and then all of a sudden it's like, Japan, London and the west coast... all in a month!

TA: So you've played Japan?

LMK: We didn't play but they flew me over there to kinda oversee the editing with the video because the guy who did it is Japanese.

TA: Is that Nakano?

LMK: Yeah. And he's amazing!

TA: I was really impressed with *World Clique* because it seemed that that was the way that a few groups were gonna go — psychedelic. You know, with the B 52's, with some of their releases and remixes, stuff that combines the best of funk, soul, and rock. People got excited when De La Soul came along because they brought together the '60s psychedelic and '70s funk with rap. And not just as a music thing but even stylistically with the fashion. Then here you kids come! I was impressed by your sampling. Is that a Sly Stone sample on "Try Me On"?

LMK: (singing) - That 'Na-na-na-na-naaaa!'

TA: Yeah, that! It sounds like Sly. Where'd you get that?

LMK: Actually that's from a jazz record. A lot of the things we get are from the worst records!

TA: But you pull out some cute parts. Are there Led Zeppelin samples in there, too? I read where Dimitry was a big Zeppelin fan.

LMK: In "Try Me On"?

TA: Well, on the album?

LMK: No we didn't do Led Zeppelin either.

TA: I think my very favorite tune from the album is "The Power of Love." That song just

TA: That's just what you hope most remixes would do because that's when you get crazy... at the end of the record. It's a dance sensibility, you think it's over and then it starts to jam. It's not over.

LMK: Yeah! It's so psychedelic! That's why it's so scary that they're trying to do away with vinyl. I don't mind that they're



did it for me right away. It works! I've heard DJs remix it and it's awesome. I can imagine the single will be really hot.

LMK: We've totally changed it though. It's really like a whole new song.

TA: Well, I'm sure that in your hands it's bound to be fabulous.

LMK: We took the part at the end, 'ayee ayee ayee aaa,' and used that more as a hook. Instead of just something at the end, you get more of it.

doing away with vinyl because the CD is... technologically it is much better, but, before they do away with vinyl, they better find a way to mix CDs. They, the record companies, didn't care. The record companies did not give a shit that it was going to hurt the DJs until the most ironic thing, and this is usually the way it works, the people they were trying to phase out started to break through and make them money. Once Technotronic broke through, they were like, 'Wait a minute! This band wouldn't have gotten here if it wasn't for the DJs playing them for months.' By then, it was almost too late to put stuff into motion. They didn't care. Basically they care about the money. But they still are trying to understand dance music.

TA: Where do you think that's going? Deee-Lite is obviously going to crossover into the mainstream. Where do you think all of this is going?

LMK: They all are looking for dance bands. No doubt about it, they're all trying to find dance groups. Groups that could write something that could be successful, yet, I hate that word

lowest common denominator. I think that's why a lot of people are excited about Deee-Lite because, you seem to have a strong sense of integrity that doesn't appear to be prone to "selling out," or doing any kind of great revising. I think people are excited about that because they think that you can retain that originality, you have real appeal.

record companies have got to support it because they can't ignore it any longer.

TA: Right. Now, how do you see your development, the group's development over time in light of how the record companies might go? I saw something in your bio that said if you go mainstream that's fine, if they buy it, that's great, but we know who our audience is and we want to be true to our original following.

LMK: Well, we're gonna do our own thing. We'll just go where the music takes us. But, I think when we started we were a lot more cynical. Like we're really... Because in the mid-eighties there was like a lull in dance music coming out. You, know. So, when we started listening to classics and everything we started getting into the... Well, listening to classics musically. But I mean visually, all of a sudden we recognized (*chuckles*) like this whole thing that happened in the seventies with black exploitation movies, just how it kinda put a 'cap' on the Black Liberation movement. And so we were really cynical about that, progress. It was very... dressing and everything, that whole thing. Occasionally people would try to peg us. Like fashion magazines, "Oh y'all are a seventies revival band!" Like, wait a minute... *revive?* You know? They've got it all wrong! A lot of people say, "Oh, well nothing happened in the seventies." We were like, nobody wants to talk about what happened in the seventies and it was more like a punk thing. It was like, FUCK YOU! And then I think that happened to a lot of people in the eighties where it got very cynical. Towards the end of the eighties when it just seemed like it wasn't trendy to talk about certain issues or it wasn't like part of the thing to do. I hate to get something that's such a great issue down to something that's trendy. But I mean let's face it, in the sixties if it wasn't somewhat trendy to get a peace sign, we never would have ended the war. Not without putting the pressure on. Where like marching in front of the White House certain things might not have happened if it wasn't somewhat attractive to go to a peace march. It's just a whole kinda cynical thing that got a little bit more realistic. If anything's gonna change we've got to be more positive about it. So we got into more of a positive thing. It's not that we're all bubbling with positivity all the time, it's just that we realize, 'OK, you gotta work.' There's so much destruction facing us. I don't just mean Deee-Lite, I mean everybody.

TA: The world.

LMK: Yeah! I feel like Deee-Lite is just a reflection of the general feeling that's in the air. Obviously, that's got to be why people relate to us. They're buying the records. I mean, a lot of it's the music but it's also that there's the positive thing about us. 'OK, we've got to do something.' So, I think we'll probably stay in a positive direction. Unless, of course nothing gets done in the nineties. Like in the eighties nothing seemed to get done. I don't know, I mean, you can only guess about the future. If I don't see more people taking stands, it could easily get to be more of a cynical thing as far as change is concerned.

GLOSSARY

Deee- The prefix Deee put in front of anything the least bit groovy is taken to the nth degree. Deee-licious, it tastes so good. Deee-with it, it's the Shits. Get the picture of the Garden of Earthly Deee-Lite.

Doodlebug Groov-nick artists/illustrators/designers.

Groov-nick Global Villager. Club Tart. Fabuli for the New Age.

Sampladelic Special audio effects that utilize digital sampling, computerized sound programming, and mixing, incorporating elements of House, Disco, Pop, Rock, etc. Also, Deee-Lite's production company, Sampledelic Productions.

Global Village The place that is the Garden of Earthly Deee-Lite. New Ethnic.

Age Of Communication The global flow of ideas and information being the basis of the grooviness of things in the Garden Of Earthly Deee-Lite.

Holographic Groove Sound Deee-Lite's up-to-the-minute sound variation on the strong bass, hard drum and gospel influence in current dance music, better known as House. This stuff sounds like the real thing for a new age of hardcore dance club fans. Funky fresh multi-dimensional mix of 60s psychedelia, 70s funk sound, and 80's technology makes anything sound fun.

Groove O'clock When groov-nicks get busy; 'It's time to jam!' See the New Age Power Soul Wave.

Deee-Do Who'd a thought a headband on a flip, Pucci tights, and catsuits could become such the rage?

LMK: The English charts basically have all dance music right now. This can indicate to the major labels over here that it's not, I mean... First of all, the reason why there's so much more dance music, and there's so much that they can't ignore it, is because it was the dance community that embraced the technology. First. It wasn't like suburban, like college radio, you know. It wasn't like a rock crowd or whatever college radio is playing, you know. It was like the dance community in the urban areas, you know, the club scene. And they embraced the technology. That's why there's so much more music. That's why there's just a whole explosion of dance music. And the

crossover. What is crossover anyway? Crossover is just a matter of getting the music to the people. It's not really about people's choices.

TA: I agree. I think a lot of times people misinterpret and think that crossover implies that you have to overmarket to get a lot of people to buy your thing. I think some of the best efforts are where the product is what it is and people either buy it or they don't. And if what you're doing is good, it goes beyond just pure mass appeal. It's more than just the

Deee-Lite, left to right: Super
DJ Dimitry, Jungle DJ Towa
Towa, Lady Miss Kier. Photo:
Simon Fowler.

TA: Are there any things that Deee-Lite personally believes in or embraces spiritually to work on developing your own positive outlooks?

LMK: Well, I think dancing is one.

TA: Good answer.

LMK: Dancing and music. I guess that's the main thing. Music is really what takes me there. But also communicating with people. When you share information with someone, that to me is really uplifting, to learn something new. To learn about different organization doing different things. That's really positive.

TA: While you're mentioning organizations, have you done benefits with ACT UP there in New York? I think I saw a notice for a benefit you're scheduled to do with the Gay Men's Health Crisis in New York.

LMK: ACT UP...I don't think we did anything with them. We did do a benefit or two for Gay Men's Health Crisis and one with HEAL and one with Community Research..

TA: Are you pro ACT UP?

LMK: I have to know more. Certain things I love that they've done. Like when they went to this church here and they literally turned their backs. Basically the Cardinal turned his back on the gay community so they when in and they turned their back, literally. That was really beautiful, really amazing. I can't say that I've liked everything ACT UP's done. The outing thing is really fascist. I can't support that. If you're not together enough and you don't have the strength of character to say what you're about is who you are, then why should you be pointed out as a role model? You're twelve years old and you want to come out and it's pointed out that there's this coward who happens to be a celebrity yet they won't admit it, that's not going to help you. What I think would be more positive to do is to contact all the people that are afraid to come out who are celebrities and could be role models and give them information. Recommend some books....

TA: Try to help them develop some confidence so they can come out on their own.

LMK: Yeah. Contact them behind the scenes and say, "Look this is what I think would be helpful to the world if you were to take a stand on this." Leave it up to the individual because just pointing fingers.... that's not good. That's creating an hysteria, and this is not the time to be feeding any kind of hysteria. I think if you're together enough to say something that's gonna

be positive about your sexuality, then great! But if you have to denounce who you are then someone from your community should contact you and try to talk to you about how important it is to be more positive about it.

TA: I thought as much about your feelings towards out-cate asked if any members were gay or itry answered didn't think it

ing when the Advocate of Deee-Lite's member bisexual and Dimity that he really was anyone's

As far as Deee-Lite is concerned, we're not gay straight or bisexual, we're open minded and sexually free. And beyond that it's nobody's business what we do unless you see it!

business or that it was important. Professionally it really shouldn't have anything to do with how good you are as musicians or whatever.

LMK: Right. As far as Deee-Lite is concerned, we're not gay straight or bisexual, we're open minded and sexually free. And beyond that it's nobody's business what we do unless you see it. (Laughs)

TA: Right! OK! Perfect. I know you sew and you've studied textile design in school. I think you'd be a fabulous designer, do you see yourself doing a line of clothing at some point in the future? Would you like to do a label?

LMK: I would. I mean, I wanted to be Pucci! I did! I was making costumes for this one band in New York which was Dimity, Sister Dimension and Lady Bunny. I was go-go dancing, I started go-go dancing to support myself. Not stripping, but club dancing. And that's when I decided this, entertain-

ing, is better, it's so much more an in-depth expression of the joyous movement of dance that brings out your soul and everything. s And so, I decided I'd go into music and dancing.

TA: Were you doing this at the Pyramid and Susanne Bartsch's Copa parties?

LMK: Yeah, Copa, I danced for her. I was the only one that wasn't a drag queen at the time. Actually, Deee-Lite played the opening night of the Copa. And I danced for her at Bentley's, because before Copa she had another club called Bentley's.

TA: The Wednesday night parties we heard so much about.

LMK: Oh, they were great. And then I did this club called Afrochine.

TA: Wasn't Dimity spinning there?

LMK: Yeah, he was spinning there.

TA: Before you all went whole hog with the group, with performing and signing the record contract, did you have regular day jobs?

LMK: Well, let's see... Before Dimity was DJ-ing he was a go-go dancer, too, at a place called Pizza A Go-Go. Then he managed a restaurant and he was always DJ-ing but before he made a living with it he did these other things. But he's been DJ-ing for a while, something like four or five years. I was... God! I had every job in the book! I was a waitress, I worked as a bathroom attendant.

TA: In a restaurant or a club?

LMK: In a club. At Area.

TA: There's the story!

LMK: Yeah! (Laughs) Actually, I worked in the windows, too, at Area. I worked in a gallery doing errands and things. And then go-go dancing. I made furniture. I used to make, art furniture. 'I'm a jewelry designer! I'm a fashion designer! I make furniture!'

TA: (Laughs) OK! I guess you'll do whatever you have to do!

LMK: There's so many people in New York like that, that can do so many things.

TA: Right. Multi-talented. Speaking of which... do you co-write the songs and lyrics?

LMK: Basically, I write just about all of the lyrics. The ideas

we all talk about. The they come from all of us. They aren't all mine. I write the words though and some of the music. We all write the music, that's pretty equally divided. Dimitry and Towa do more of the production. Like, Sampladelic Productions, which is also Deee-Lite, through which we do mixes. Dimitry and Towa do most of that. They just did a Jungle Brothers remix of "Black Woman" which is gorgeous!

TA: Where did you get your names? Were they given to you or did you adopt them yourselves?

LMK: Well, we were all born with them.

TA: Well, Kier Kirby.

LMK: But I used to be called Baby Kier but now I'm Lady Kier.

TA: All grown up. (Laughs)

LMK: Since I turned into a Lady they've dropped the Baby. I guess I was about four years old then. Let's see, Dimitry... Actually, you know they used to call him Daddy O. But then we thought people would confuse him with the other DJ, Big Daddy Kane. But some people still call him Daddy O. They call him different things from different clubs. Jungle DJ Towa Towa... I don't know, because he... well, that's his name Towa Towa, that's Korean. Towatae, and it means, it's ironic, it means peace from the east. His parents named him that not knowing that he would later moved to the west and bring a peaceful message. I think that's really sweet. That's the kind of thing that we've got to keep... destiny. It's a certain magic.

TA: There's a lot about karma and the mystical or psychic forces in your lyrics.

LMK: Were talking about the sort of magic that's in coincidences.

TA: It appears from all the many accounts of how you all came together that it was very karmic and not accidental. It was destiny and fate and it's obviously working out quite well.

LMK: I think so. I really think so. I don't believe in destiny to the point where, oh, with a Nazi victim and say that was his destiny. I don't believe in absolutes but I do believe to a certain extent you can make your own destiny which is making your own luck. Just by believing. For instance, we used to be really afraid of the music business; that's one of the reasons why we played for three years just doing it in clubs. It wasn't about trying to go to a record company and get signed. But at one point we just said, hey, if I believe in destiny then why can't I believe that there will be someone in the music industry that's gonna know and respect what we do? And once we started believing that, it wasn't so hard. We weren't surprised when we met Bill Coleman and Nancy Jeffries.

TA: How did you meet Bill and Nancy?

LMK: He came to one of the shows and then we talked to him afterwards and we gave him a tape, he asked for a demo tape. He was working at *Billboard* and that was it. That was the break we needed.

TA: Nancy is with Elektra?

LMK: Nancy is with Elektra. She's the Vice President over A&R (*Artist and Repertoire*). She's the only woman in that kind of position, a VP of A&R. And that was really like a blessing.

TA: Your destiny again.

LMK: Definitely!

TA: A lot of bands have that apprehension about the major labels because it is easy to be compromised or just overwhelmed by it all or just falling into the wrong hands because it is so money-grubbing.

LMK: Yeah, and you think that it's like us and them but actually it's a mistake to think that way because they need you and you need them and they're human. So, yeah, some people in the industry may have a money-grubbing attitude but you can say no. You don't have to do certain things that they may suggest.

TA: Was *World Clique* done when you signed the contract?

LMK: It wasn't recorded but we do most of it in our home so we gave them... well, most of the songs were already written, so then we signed the deal... we knew we were gonna get one of the companies, we were pretty sure it was going to be Elektra so we went in and started recording the album anyway. So we were half-way recorded by the time we signed the deal. We just had that much faith that it didn't matter, we were going to do this anyway.

TA: Have you already started work on the next album?

LMK: Well, we were together for three years before the album came out so we wrote enough material in those three years for about three albums.

TA: How will you pace their releases?

LMK: It really depends. Like, for the last five months we haven't had too much time to write new music so, we're really lucky that we had this stuff all ready. It's not produced but when we produce it, the production sound comes out differently every year. What we'll do as soon as this tour is over is stop everything and start writing again. But, like "Try Me On I'm Very You" that was totally spontaneous.

TA: You did that while you were recording the album?

LMK: Yeah, while we were doin' the album.

TA: That's really amazing because that's a really strong song.

LMK: That song's interesting because it's usually the least favorite song and then it grows on people. They like it a lot.

TA: I actually took to it right away. It's so funky. But it does grow on me more and more. It seems the more I listen to it, the more I hear different things going on in it. It's really danceable though. It's one of the funkier ones on the album, maybe only second to "Who Was That" for that funky feeling. Your music is so refreshing because it is breaking through the lull that you spoke of earlier. It's not at all saying too much that Deee-Lite's music is boosting people's levels of hope, saying that we can still be happy and positive and feel good about things.

LMK: We've got to if we're going to survive in this day and age.

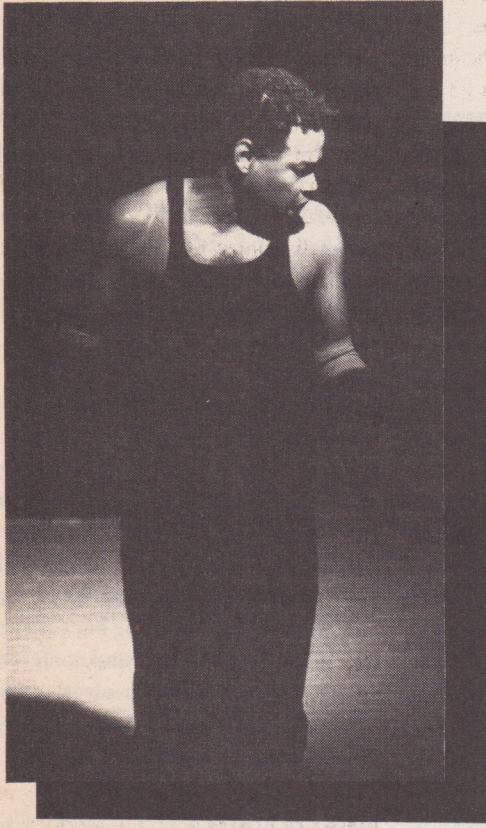
TA: I come in contact with quite a few ACT UP members and people in different activist organizations and there seems to be a new spiritualism emerging from these groups and individuals. People are learning or re-learning how to heal and nurture themselves and each other. A lot of people like to compare it to the sixties Love In thing because now there are all kinds of retreats and conferences and things. Are any of you involved personally in any organizations or AIDS activist movements? Where's Deee-Lite in all of this?

LMK: I think that positivity can change your life. There's no doubt about it. It's done it for me. I was basically kind of a cynical child and it wasn't until I got a little older and met a few people that were just so positive. I kind of studied them and I saw that it wasn't that everything went right for them but it was just that they appreciated each moment in life more. And as soon as I realized, 'What you mean every moment in your life matters!' Even when you think you're just killing time. There's really no such thing as 'killing time.' I think that positivity is great to enhance your life. I don't think it's curing AIDS. It will not. It can help you. It can help you enjoy what life you have left. There is evidence that a positive attitude can help in cases of terminal illness. But we need more money for AIDS and more education. I think we have to be positive to cure AIDS. We have to be positive that there will be a cure. There will be. We have to believe that. But we also can't just have 'blind faith,' we have to be ready to work to get the information out to the people who aren't aware of the facts. ☺

Shut Up and Dance:

Ishmael Houston-Jones

by Lawrence Steger



Ishmael Houston-Jones in his solo improvisation "Prelude To the End of Everything" at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago.

Photo: James Prinz.

Ishmael Houston-Jones, choreographer/dancer, has been living and performing in New York City since 1979. His work has been presented across the U.S., Canada, Europe, and in Nicaragua. He was in Chicago this past October as a visiting artist at the School of the Art Institute's Gallery 2. Ishmael conducted a week-long workshop at Gallery 2, culminating in an evening of group improv and solo performances. In

1990, *The Undead*, a collaboration with writer Dennis Cooper, premiered at the Los Angeles Festival of the Arts. He has also collaborated with photographer Robert Flynt, designers Huck Snyder and John DeFazio and composers Chris Cochrane, Fast Forward, and Guy Yarden, as well as appearing in the work of John Bernd, Ping Chong, Dancenoise, Yvonne Meier and John Sayles.

Lawrence Steger: The recent thing you did with Dennis Cooper, it was called...

Ishmael Houston-Jones: *The Undead*. It was developed last winter at the Mark Taper Forum in L.A. and was workshopped for six weeks. Later it was accepted by LACE (Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibition) as their entry into the festival.

LS: Who was involved in the production?

IHJ: Robert Flynt did the visuals, he's a photographer. He photographed the cast underwater and we used those as projected images. Let's see. Tom Recchione did the sound, Dennis wrote the text and I and Peter Brosius co-directed and choreographed.

LS: So you directed it together?

IHJ: Yeah, that was a decision that was made after the workshop just because of the working situation we found ourselves in. Even though he was basically a theatre director and I was basically a choreographer we found we were both doing things sort of equally. He was choreographing, I was staging. So it seemed sort of practical if we designated it that way.

LS: Where did you get the cast from?

IHJ: Well we auditioned about 80 people - all from L.A. I knew that I didn't want to work with all actors, so we called choreographers asked them to suggest people, we called performance people. In the end if you would like to categorize, we wound up with a cast of six: three who would call themselves actors, one person who was a dancer/choreographer and two people who would be called performance artists.

LS: And it was developed out of writings by Cooper?

IHJ: Actually, it was developed in tandem. The piece really started a year ago. There was no script at all, there was no writing. And we started with movement - Dennis interviewed the guys. I guess you could say the piece is about gay men, in their twenties now. I don't know how much more specific, ... thread we have ...

LS: He interviewed them?

IHJ: Yes about their lives, getting their language, their thoughts, ideas about music, sex, and he developed the writing while I started using movement ideas - just ideas I had ...

LS: About what these people were talking about???

IHJ: Uhm, yeah, well, a lot of my movement seems to be a lot about relationships — physical relationships when people stand next to each other: having them do real tasks. Embracing, slapping, hugging, interrogating each other.

LS: Relationships?

IHJ: Yes.

So, then we started scripting things, creating monologues. We work well together and have a good repartee. It was a very curious thing, because when we set out, we knew we didn't want it to be actorly at all, or theatrical in a traditional way. Nothing stagey. I mean when Dennis writes it is in this real flat voice - I really love it - this complete flatness.

LS: Well, was it based on these interviews?

IHJ: No, not really, I guess that the interviews were more or less of a springboard. Kinda to see where these guys were: people if not a full generation, at least a half-generation removed from us just to see who they are, what it's like growing up gay.

LS: So do you feel like the writing or the performance of it reflected this distance between Cooper, yourself and these guys?

IHJ: Yeah. I think that the piece is a lot about disconnection. A lot of the movement ideas were things that never get fulfilled, things that almost, connections that almost get made but not. And the writing, most of the writing is done in monologue or even when it's dialogue it's actually two monologues hitting each other rather than real conversation.

LS: Would you say that what came out of the performance was about young gay-male sexuality?

IHJ: I don't know if it was so much focused on sexuality as a totality. More on young gay males in the age of AIDS not being able to connect.

LS: The title.

IHJ: Yes, it's the living but sort of the negative form of the living. That sort of unconnectedness of things is what Dennis and I have both been working on as a theme. A lot. Whether it's making love to a cinder block or Dennis' writings about brutality, cool brutality.

LS: Yes, a sort of slow brutality, to borrow a phrase. When did you start working with him?

IHJ: In 1985 - a piece called "Them". I went and saw him read

and I told him that he made me feel vulnerable. I guess that he had seen me perform but we got together and bantered around a lot of ideas and started working on this series called "Hole". Basically Dennis plays records and I respond to them. There's different themes. There was talk at one point as to doing them as a prelude to "The Undead" but we eventually thought it would be unnecessary.

LS: With "The Undead", do you feel like it's finished and that you can do it again like a theatrical piece?

IHJ: Yes, oh yeah, I mean it's a finished piece. There would be some changes if staged again and if the cast changes. I think even more than the choreography and the staging, the writing was really geared towards these six guys. They bonded as a group.

LS: So you would do it again with these guys?

IHJ: Yes. We did it again in San Diego and we had to make one cast change and it was very interesting — it was very fragile because I think that Dennis really has an ear for hearing voices and he had written all of these parts for these guys. When we replaced one cast member it sort of threw it a little bit — in an interesting way. We realized that if we had to change three guys then the writing itself would have to change.

LS: Don't you find that in the movement though - I mean you're working with people and their bodies?

IHJ: Yes, some people would be harder to replace in terms of the text and others for the movement. One person, the choreographer/dancer that was in the piece, Steven Craig, replacing him would be difficult since so much of his personality on stage was about giving him perimeters to work in and sort of framing his own movement.

LS: Is that a loosening up of what your role as a choreographer is or has that always been. . .

IHJ: That's always been. I've never liked giving people steps - giving people specific movement things. I've more or less looked at people, figure out what they're capable of and what they're comfortable with... It's sort of interesting because once the texts were written by Dennis, he allowed the same sort of changes. Kinda so they would fit their mouths and certain words, rhythms. I've never really wanted people to move like me in performances.

LS: What sort of imagery do you use in making new work?

IHJ: Strange question but I like working with violence, I'm not even sure why, and I think I've stopped trying to figure out why.

LS: Have other people stopped trying to figure out why?

IHJ: Yeah, right. No, people keep asking why. I mean it's a response, a possible response to the world. I like struggling. I mean this newest solo that I'm doing this weekend - I'm not sure how finished it is - but it's really a duet for me and a cinderblock. It's sort of about a story of a painting of Frida Kahlo and a death of a friend of mine. Wrestling imagery almost always shows up somewhere in my work - if it's not a cinderblock it's a dead goat, or my mother or ...

LS: The floor?

IHJ: The floor. Or myself. Or other dancers. I mean, sort of wrestling imagery keeps recurring. An actual physical struggle.

LS: That's funny - I mean the title of the pieces don't refer to a struggle but more to a stoppage point - no more struggle. All of the work that I'm familiar with, either through writings or actually seeing it, is about this violence. Correct me if I'm making unwarranted generalizations, but all of the work that I'm familiar with has taken place in the eighties - the AIDS virus decade. And really, your career, as a dancer, choreographer, performer...

IHJ: Yes, I moved to NYC in 1979. I had made some work in Philadelphia. But I would think of that as more of an incubation period.

LS: Would you consider that your work is defined either through the violence or tragedy of what's happened in the eighties.

IHJ: I mean, I respond to what is going on around me and it's not just the AIDS crisis. I mean our political system, the incredible increase in homelessness. . .

LS: Well, I guess what I'm getting at is that there are others who are working with this violence. . .

IHJ: I think that we live in a particularly violent time where humanity is being threatened, if not by war, if not by disease, if not by, you know, being thrown out on the street by rampant real estate. I think it's sort of an insidious violence that it happening to people, to the environment. There is a lot of disconnectedness. I guess internalized violence - I feel that as a gay man. As much as I try not to, I feel like I have internalized a lot of it. As a gay black man - a double duty of internalized violence.

When I do these workshops, I try to work with who these people are, I try to get a sense of what they are. I like coming into a room full of people and getting them to reveal parts of themselves that they wouldn't reveal onstage or to a stranger - both in movement and in speaking words. Some guy in a review said that he found that I revealed onstage what most people wouldn't reveal in the privacy of their own home. ☺

Matt O'Neill

Every Roman was surrounded by slaves. The slave and his psychology flooded ancient Italy, and every Roman became inwardly, and of course unwittingly, a slave. Because living constantly in the atmosphere of slaves, he became infected through the unconscious with their psychology. No one can shield himself from such an influence.

— *Contributions to Analytical Psychology, London, 1928*
C. G. Jung

Matt O'Neill's paintings are based in an academic European technique of underpainting and heavy glazing. Their rich time-consuming qualities convey a leisurely lifestyle where the aristocrats of Europe or of America's deep south could afford the days or weeks of sitting which were required to produce a single canvas — while crews of the less privileged toiled to maintain their fields, cook their meals, or fight their battles.

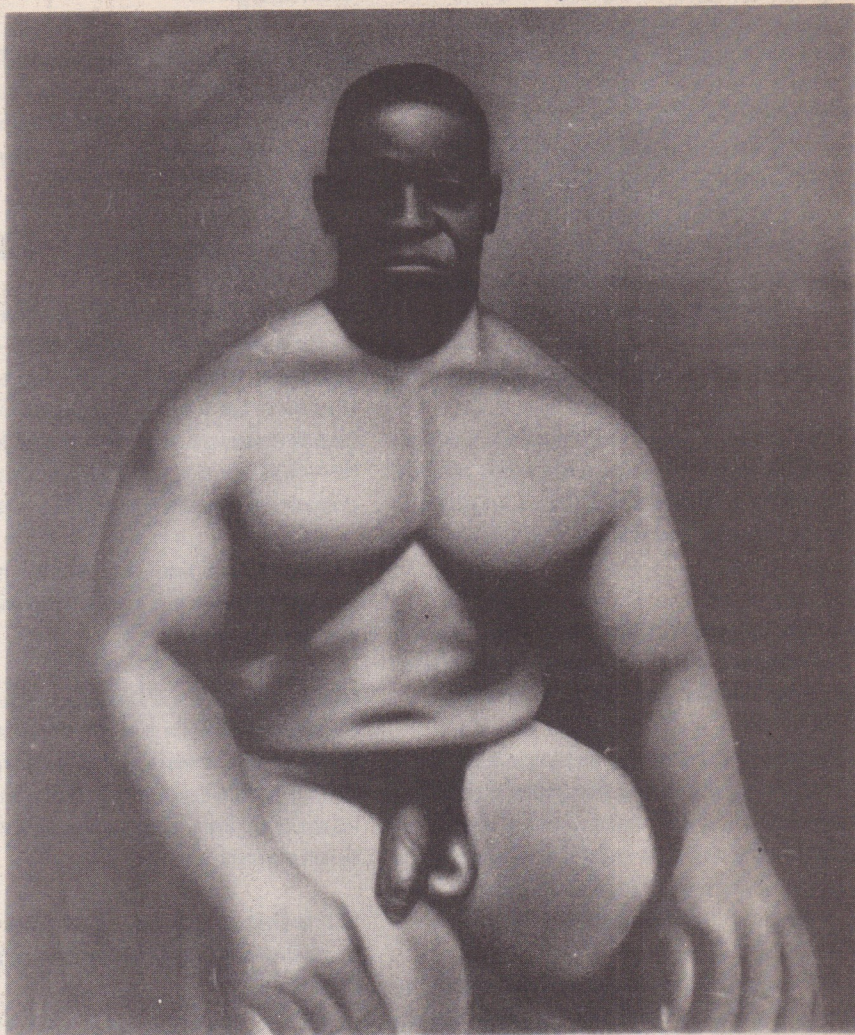
In "Nude Portrait II," a black fighter is portrayed, not surrounded by accumulated material objects or perched upon a champion horse, but isolated, as an object in a dark void. The fighter seems caught in a time warp, as if the Civil War hadn't quite happened. He sits with a worn expression, waiting to be told what to do, who to fight, and whether to win or lose. At present he is told to sit and pose. Perhaps his owner wants to immortalize him as one more family holding, and — in his forefather's tradition — to guarantee his and his children's opportunities to parlor talk and to boast of family holdings, monies acquired, and battles won.

By contrast, in "Young Girl with House Pet," a fair-skinned, young girl sits on a wooden rocking horse, surrounded (hemmed in?) by material objects bought for her by the family. Both portraits seem painted from a patriarchal mandate, one to show privilege, the other to show possession. But the expression on the little girl's face is also drawn and bleak. Is she really privileged? Or will she grow up to be a sick, bedridden sister in a Tennessee Williams play, forever suffering from the unhealthy environment which surrounds her?

O'Neill successfully crosses the black/white border showing a sensitivity to the deficiencies of our aristocratic European based 20th century society. His images are timely and universal. As we await the slow revisionist process of our old paternalistic society, O'Neill gives us one more snapshot of these outdated conditions.

— Joe Lindsay

Matt O'Neill received a fellowship grant from the National Endowment for the Arts in 1990. The Denver Art Museum recently purchased two of his canvases for their permanent collection. He is represented by the Hassell/Haeseler Gallery, 1743 Wazee, Denver, CO, 80202, Phone (303) 295-6442.



Above: Matt O'Neill,
Nude Portrait II, 1990, oil
on canvas

Left: Matt O'Neill, Young
Girl With House
Pet, 1990, oil on canvas



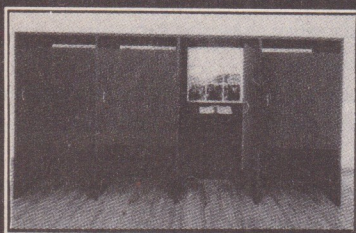
Adrian Piper, Pretend #3, 1990

4 enlarged photos, silkscreened text (detail)

ADRIAN PIPER

I felt a real sense of pride and strange relief when I walked into Adrian Piper's show at the John Weber gallery, N.Y.C. There I found large aesthetically pleasing and very commercial photographs of mostly black people in different settings. At the bottom of each photo were words which when presented in series read as phrases like "Pretend Not To Know What You Know" or single photos such as

"Power" and "Knowledge". The single photographs of blacks I found moving read at the bottom "You are



**Adrian Piper
Vote/Emote
1990**

mixed media installation

"Safe", "We Are Among You" and one in particular featuring Africans read "We Are Within You". As I moved about the room taking in the images, I tried to specify and clarify my feelings.

I was initially shocked by the enlarged photographs of black men being attacked by police (circa 1960) juxtaposed with reassuring images of blacks seated around a dining table with the words "We Are Among You" I could not reconcile the two pictures and their messages. In short Piper's conceptual strategy was effective. It elicited an intellectual and gut reaction from me. I felt helpless — having initially thought "These are the black people I know, these are my people, my family" and then having my self assurance of place and identity shattered by viewing a white police attacking a black man cowering from

the blows. I realized that man could easily be myself.

Having been emotionally and intellectually jarred, I receptively and cautiously walked into the adjacent room containing the rest of Piper's work. There I found gallery goers waiting to go inside four large walk-in size black booths. Curious, I did also. Inside, again the faces of blacks confront me. The photographs this time

are lit from behind and encompass the entire upper half back of the booth. There is no way to avert one's gaze from the picture. The faces look disenchanted and tired (they are


shots from the '63 civil rights march on Washington.) There was a thick three ring notebook and pen with the question probing what my deepest fears were that I was afraid of "we" knowing. Suspicious, I wrote. I went into the other three booths. The questions were similar. To "what are you afraid we will do with the power once we gain it?" I wrote, feeling self-righteously exempt. Here anyway. Leaving the booths, continued to explore the room. Piper had piqued my own deep conflicts of identity and race in a way that no person has.

On the train back to Chicago I continued to relive my first impressions of Piper's photographs and texts and still have not reconciled my dual responses; the work was for me simultaneously seductive, haunting and acutely relevant.

— Todd Roulette

Dear CSL/Candyass,

I must say that you were **"Livin' Large"** (as my friend Trent would say) at STUX gallery. And I'm not just talking about the deluxe private after party at *cher* McDonalds. (In N.Y.C.'s financial district no less). The work as a whole would qualify as **"Livin' Large"**. Everything so **slick** and custom — including that shocking **PORNO-GRAPHIC** calendar of *toi*.

I saw children with those! 


Some of my favorites were the thought-provoking mini-baseball bats that read

"I Want To Love U Butt I Don't No How" and the Leibow-

itz china serving set for six with various inscriptions beautifully packaged in gold boxes. Your tempting display of them, hundreds stacked one on top the other in the middle of the room made me want

to charge enough for a wedding party of 500. The hundreds of tiny teddy


bears also, their yellow t-shirts that read **"Will Make a Cubist Painting Someday But Right Now It Is Not Important"** made me feel as though

I was in an enlightened  children's toy store. But, you really outdid yourself with the K-Mart size door mats reading **"LOSER LINE FORMS**

HERE" and that Romper-Room colored rug with **"There Are 2 Things I Need To Watch 4 the Rest of My Life: My Weight and My Racism"** was too fantastic. Sentiments that I hope

all gay men keep close to the ♥!

The **in-your-face** high school mascot banners (minus the mascots) with **"Don't Pretend 2 Like It"** and

"Expect Copying" were nice. Is this a bit mocking of your audience? Oh well, you're the artist.  Also, I had a time with those flat shipping boxes with the Whiney monologue. I knew it had to refer to something important — instability maybe?

I am very proud of you. The after party was too much *fun*. The Hampton crowd, too busy closing their summer places truly missed a treat by not attending.

— TR

A Tribute to

FICTION IS AUTOBIOGRAPHY, NOT LIFE AS IT IS, but life as we would like it to be. I create all sorts of literature that I can live in, but seldom share, even my tragedies.

But today, I would like to tell you a true story. Nothing happens in this tale, but it does tell you something of what I have learned about life.

The story begins at 2:45 A.M. Saturday morning, when I returned from having a drink with Tony at Mariee's Crisis Cafe. There was one message on the machine: "If Kevin Paulson lives here, this message is from his brother, Donald. Call me whenever you get in. I am leaving this message at eleven-thirty." *Beep*. So I took off my shoes and sat down on the window seat, staring at the copper green Statue of Liberty in the Harbor, wondering what new price I would pay for my freedom. I looked up Donald's number, then dialed.

"Donald, this is Kevin. Who died?"

"Grandma." For me there was no surprise, but Donald would have laughed if I told him what I had dreamt the night before. "She would have been ninety-five this week. She had a series of strokes and heart attacks. The doctors could have kept her alive with machines, but she refused to live that way. The funeral is Monday. In Johnstown."

"I'm sorry."

"We're leaving tomorrow. Let me give you Aunt Jane's number. That's where Mom is staying."

Elizabeth Kiniry was born, resided, ... and died in Johnstown, Pennsylvania, a coal smelting town in the northern Appalachian mountains. She had survived all

during her visit to the New York City World's Fair. I was five years old at the time. Grandma had taken the train out, and so my father drove us into Manhattan, which he hated to do, in the big red Chevrolet station wagon with fins. Dad and I waited in the car, eating lemon cookies and reading *Justice League of America*, number 43. Mom walked a white-haired, sagging woman in a floral dress to the car. At seventy, Grandma Wise was the oldest woman I had ever seen.

The next day, we went to the Flushing Meadows Fair Grounds. Grandma rode all the rides with me, because Dad had to work, and Mother was too faint. After the General Motors Exhibit, where I drove around in a real car, Grandma told Mother to get a driver's license. Mother was forty-three at the time.

Later, as Grandma and I waited for the Monorail, I asked, "Will Mother get to be as fun as you when she gets old?"

Mother overheard and said, "Only when I have done as many naughty things as Grandma. And then make you pay for them."

Grandma and I got on the monorail alone and she said, "Never stop having fun. Otherwise you'll pay your mother's price."

"And what's that?"

"Blaming your unhappiness on other people. It's very hard not to know whether or not you are happy." Sometimes when I am feeling numb, I think of that monorail ride with my grandma.

I saw Grandma only four or five times more in the years before I went to college. Then, when the trouble started with Mother, I did not see anyone in the family.

I had not seen Grandma for thirteen years before last October. Once more, Grandma took the train out, this time to stay with my parents in Yaphank, Long Island. She asked my mother to invite the three sons out to dinner, one at a time, with their wives.

Mother called Donald, the second son, and he brought over Christine and his children the next night. Early, the eldest son, was invited a week later and although Ginny had not lived with him for nine years, she came along.

Mother and I talked a few days after. Mother asked if I would like to bring someone to dinner with Grandma. I told her that Brian would be delighted to join us, the family.

"I meant a girl."

"I meant my lover. Or I don't come." Grandma would understand, I hoped.

So Brian and I rented a car on a Wednesday night and drove out to Yaphank. Mother was on edge, and was trying to cover. She served roast pork, baked potatoes,

Tiny Tim

three of the great Johnstown floods. An Irish Catholic, she decided at eighteen to marry George Wise, a German Protestant. The rector at St. Andrews Roman Catholic Church allowed her to serve public penance for two months. Nevertheless, Elizabeth bore three Catholic daughters and three Catholic sons to George Wise. She bore to a travelling salesman one Catholic daughter, my mother, Vivian Ruth.

I had never known Grandma very well. My first memory of her was in the blue and orange year of 1964,

and her specialty: frozen stringbeans, baked in Campbell's Cream of Mushroom Soup, topped with Mrs. Paul's Onion Rings. I think that this was supposed to mean that she still loved me.

When the dishes were cleared away, Grandma said, "I think I'd like to sit a spell with my grandson." Brian and Dad took the hint and suggested to Mother that they go for a walk.

I poured tea into two large mugs and Grandma and I sat watching t.v. for a few minutes. Her mug read "World's Best Grandma." Mine read "Souvenir of Las Vegas."

Grandma said, "I'm going to die this year, but don't morn me. I've had a fun life. It's time to go."

"Oh grandma..."

"Now listen. That other boy, Brian, seems very nice. I'm glad I met him. Don't worry about your mother. She just goes around looking for excuses to be bitter. Now I haven't been the best mother either. Or the best grandmother. But I have enjoyed myself. Remember that I taught you life is getting

just send a mass card?"

"But, Mother I can..."

"I hear your father calling. I'll be back in New York next Sunday. Why don't you give me a call then?" *Click.*

Numb. Why did she always turn me off like that?

I watched the sunlight glisten on the river, and then I called Amanda, my best friend. "We were just about to call you! What are you doing tomorrow?" "Not going to my Grandma's funeral," I explained.

"Then you're going with us to Fire Island. Meet us in Penn Station at 9 a.m." As I hung up, the phone rang. Tim.

Tim is from East Millinoquit, Maine, and is my private hero. Tim told me once that he was named after the Dickens character, when he was adopted, which is sort of funny because Tim is anything but tiny. He is six-foot-one and weighs well over 200 pounds. He also told me that his nickname is Endora, but I have never heard anyone call him that.

Tim challenges and befuddles everyone. The first words I ever heard Tim say were not to me, but to Brian,

Grandma Wise &

what you can get out of life while you can get it."

"Yes, Grandma."

"And forgive your mother a little. She does not know what she has become."

I WOKE UP AT 7:31 THE MORNING after Donald called. I went to the gym, called the train station, called my buddy manager, Debbie, and told her that I would not be in. I cleaned the apartment, even though it had not gotten dirty in the seven months that Brian had been on tour.

At noon, I dialed the number which my brother Donald had given me.

"Hello?"

"Hello, this is Kevin Paulson." Pause. I gave her a moment to identify herself as my Aunt Jane, but she didn't say anything. Then I asked, "Is Vivian Paulson there?"

"Hold on," then away from the phone, "Vivian! It's him."

"Hello," she said, as composed as ever.

"Hi, It's Kevin. I'm sorry to hear about Grandma."

"Thank you."

I'm taking the 8:01 train out of Newark tomorrow. Can someone pick me up at the station?"

"I don't think that will be necessary. Listen, we already have enough problems here. Why don't you

who at the time had been my boyfriend for seven hours. Tim threw open the door to the bedroom carrying a plate full of donuts and coffee and said, "I know that if you're dating someone as old and ugly as him that he must have money. So let's celebrate." Four weeks later, I moved in with both Brian and Tim, for four rocky years of cohabitation. As Lee, who also lived with us for a time, once said, "Tim is the best friend in the world to have as a former roommate."

Tim also challenges himself a lot, although these challenges usually backfire. Like when he cleans his bedroom, it is usually at the expense of the living room, the dining room, ... or when he started smoking to lose weight and got hooked on the after-dinner cigarette.

A year and a half ago, Tim was diagnosed as HIV positive. Two months ago he developed Esophageal Candidiasis, which means that he is officially a person with AIDS.

Tim moved out and moved into New York. I worry about Tim sometimes. He sweats constantly and is always tired. So I bicker with him when I see him about smoking, vitamins, drinking, and t-cell counts. It does neither of us any good.

But Tim has challenged himself to achieve some good out of a bad circumstance. His politics have changed from Reaganomic Republican to left wing. He is an integral member of ACT UP, the AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power.

Tim and I joined in March, 1988, and since then I

by
**Kevin
Thaddeus
Paulson**

have seen him blockade the FDA, attend the Civil Rights Commission in a clown mask, wrap the city's health commissioner in the bedsheets of the forgotten PWA's and , most recently, ignite the lesbian and gay community at this year's Stonewall Rally in Central Park. Tim has changed from bitchy queen to bitchy rebel.

"So whatcha doin'" he asked.

"Tim! Hi, how are you feeling?"

"Not so good. Wanna get together this weekend?"

"Can't. I'm going to Fire Island with the newlyweds. Unless you want to come."

"Sure, as long as you're paying. I've never been to Fire Island."

"Are you sure you're gay?"

"No, really, it's one of my few regrets in life. That and the fact I am the only person with AIDS who has not lost any weight."

I arrived at Penn Station the next morning at about ten minutes past nine, took more money out of the cash machine, and walked downstairs to the Long Island Railroad. Street people were sleeping in front of the closed shops, smelling of urine and sweat of Manhattan in July. I wanted to help them all and felt guilty that I could not.

I wanted coffee, extra light, extra sweet.

Tim was already there, in the beige shorts which he had bought for the gay pride march the year before ("Everyone wears shorts to the march, Kevin. Why do you think we started this revolution in June? So that we could get a tan.").

"What time is the train?" he asked. "Nine thirty-nine." "And which train will we take when Alice and Trixie show up two hours late?"

"They'll be here. And besides, this gives me the time to find coffee."

Amanda and Evelyn arrived at 9:36, and we jumped on to the Sayville train as the doors were closing. Amanda and Evelyn usually calculated their lateness pretty well, but this time they didn't allow enough time for coffee. So the four of us passed around my cup of extra light, extra sweet coffee like a communion cup, or a joint.

And I always knew where Evelyn had sipped from, by the imprint of candy apple lipstick.

Amanda and I have been daytrippers to Fire Island many times before. A daytripper is a person who spends usually one day at the beach because they cannot afford to rent or buy one of those clever cottages with backlit boardwalks whose rents are in excess of my student loan. Daytrippers are the scourge of the summer long residents, but a much needed source of tourist revenue. Especially if one can be convinced to stay in the Ice Palace for a night

or two at \$100 a day, including all the benefits of cinder box luxury.

So, as daytrippers, we have learned to enjoy the little rituals: the diesel train through southern Long Island, the bus to the dock, and then the ferry ride over.

The ferry ride over is the best part. While we wait for the boat, we go to the refreshment stand/bar and play all the songs on the jukebox of our seven summers together. Then we hear the fog-horn as the ferry docks, and we race to the top deck. This insures that we get a headstart on our tans, as well as the slap of the spray.

On the ride over, I pointed out to Tim the Hotel Belvedere, which I have always wanted to stay in, but have never been able to afford. Some night, Brian and I will come out here and take a room overlooking the bay.

The ferry docked just after noon. We walked through the town, past Michael's Restaurant, and Bloomin' Pail Florist and the Monster until we got to the beach. We took our shoes off and walked until we found the perfect spot.

The four of us lay down on Amanda's sheet, free of sand for the last time that day. Amanda lit a joint, and we passed it around in a circle, our second communion cup. Tim shrugged. "Oh well, what's another 50 t-cells?" and took a puff. Evelyn left her imprint of lipstick again.

"You know, now I know what they mean by lipstick lesbian."

"Let me tell you that I have worn lipstick a lot longer than I have been a lesbian."

Amanda and Evelyn took several long walks, as the young in love are prone to. Tim stared at the tanned men in Speedos. I napped in search of the perfect sunburn.

As we ate lunch in a restaurant overlooking the beach, I told them about my grandma and my mother. Evelyn and Amanda had met my mother the summer before. I had invited my mother and dad to see "The Music Man" at Westbury Music Fair, starring John Davidson. I had not told my mother that Brian was performing in it.

Amanda and Evelyn met my parents and I outside the theater. I introduced Amanda as my best friend. Mother was appalled that my friends were a lesbian couple, one member an Italian Jew and the other member a Black Baptist. Mother, having no other means of relating said, "You know we don't have any black friends, but while Harold and I were in Las Vegas, we did meet this American Indian. And he was just like regular people."

I swear that my mother really said that.

SO, AS WE SIPPED OUR GINGER ALE by the ocean, I told Amanda about the telephone call and she replied, "I'm not surprised. What can you expect from invertebrates?"

After lunch Tim and I decided to go swimming. I took out my contact lenses and the beach became a noisy blur. Tim took off his t-shirt and hustled me towards the water. God forbid anybody should see me without a shirt on. Especially Gregg Bordowitz." With that, he jumped into the cold, brown-green ocean. Knowing that a wet Tim was dangerous to a dry Kevin, I dove in also.

We stayed in the water for over an hour. Tim kept jumping, with his arms straight up, as each wave approached. "Maybe your mother didn't mean it. Maybe she was just trying to save you the trouble. If you don't forgive the idiots in your life for what they do to you, you'll end up with very few wise friends."

He did a somersault, then rose out on the surf, choking on the salt water. He vomited blood into the sea. I said, "Let's go back."

He said, "You go ahead; I want to remember this day as it is."

As I walked towards the sheet, I could not tell if the salt on my cheek was the spray of the ocean or my tears.

Evelyn asked if I would like to go to the grocery store with her. I nodded. We walked past the Ice Palace from where we could hear Kelly Marie singing, "*It feels like, It feels like I'm in love...*" Evelyn smiled and announced that it was time to party. She wanted to dance and to drink creamy piña coladas. We returned to the sheet, and Evelyn told Amanda. So we gathered our sneakers and suntan lotions and sheet. We woke up Tim. We checked everything (except Tim) at the coat check at the Ice Palace. Amanda and Evelyn went into the disco. I could hear a dance version of Bette Midler's "Wind Beneath My Wings." Tim said that he was tired, as he usually is nowadays, and he asked if I knew of someplace quiet. So we walked along a tree-shaded boardwalk that runs along the bay side. I told Tim my stories of Fire Island: sitting in hot tubs with glasses of cognac; swimming naked at 3 a.m. with the producer whom I had met at Tommy Tune's house; the fight with Jim Gibby about whether or not to have the menage with the pre-med student at the Carousel Guest House.

I told Tim about calling Amanda on Memorial Day weekend and making her join me here when a date had gone sour. A bleached blond twinkie had shown some proclivity for kinkier activities than I was interested in. I then jumped into a swimming pool with my contact lenses and jumped out with same. I was forced to rely on my date, who thoroughly enjoyed my dependance. Amanda rescued me, her one comment: "This is truly a case of the blond leading the blind."

We spent many better days on the Island but the

other time I talked about was when we came out for the Harmonic Convergence, the birth of a new age. And there was no room at the inn. At any of the inns. So we danced until four in the morning, then had breakfast at Michael's. We walked through the woods and the early fog until we reached the pines. We sat on the beach and waited. As the sky shifted from indigo to turquoise, hundreds joined us. We stood together in a ring as the sun, a bright red smear, crossed the horizon. And who cares whether or not that day brought about world peace? For one moment, I sang wordless tones with a score of others and I believed in something more than here and now.

Eventually, Tim had to pee, so we walked out to the little forest between the Grove and the Pines, a copse known in the seventies as the meat rack, where open gay sex lived an easier existence. "You know, Randy Shilts says that this is where it all began."

By the time we walked back, Amanda and Evelyn had already gone to dinner. I had twenty dollars left which would be enough for two drinks, a nice trip and the taxi fare back to Sayville Railroad Station. Tim and I had walked to Cherry's, a bar that I had not been in since the fateful menage with Jim Gibby. I ordered for Tim a strawberry daiquiri and for myself a frozen mudslide. Tim only likes frothy drinks. I handed Tim the pink foam and took my own pale brown drink. We found a picnic bench overlooking the dock. We watched the sun slide into the bay and we talked about our sunburns and ACT UP and how Tim used to date Tony Rizzo. Tim likes to tell me the same stories over and over again. He never remembers telling me before.

It was cold by the time the 9:15 arrived. Unlike my wise, lesbian friends, I had not brought along a long sleeve shirt, and so I huddled under the beach towels. We still sat on the top deck because that is tradition. As the boat chopped back towards the harbor, Amanda tugged my sleeve. She smiled her secret smile and pointed out the first evening star. In silence, we made our wishes. I wished that, because I could not mourn for grandma, and would not mourn for Tim, that I would become, that I would choose to be a hero.

As the other three slept to the rumble of the train, I looked out the window and knew that life is a perfect Sunday afternoon on the beach with no clouds and few responsibilities. Life is knowing that you could die at any moment and sometimes choosing to do so. Even calling your mother.

Life is swimming alone in the Atlantic Ocean, sometimes with a friend. ▼

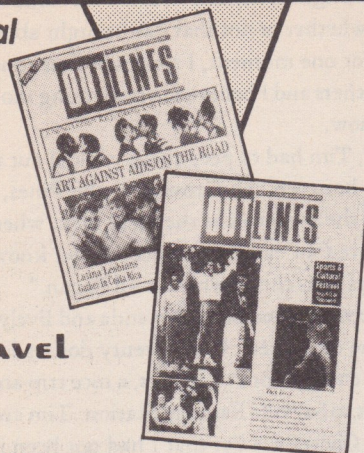
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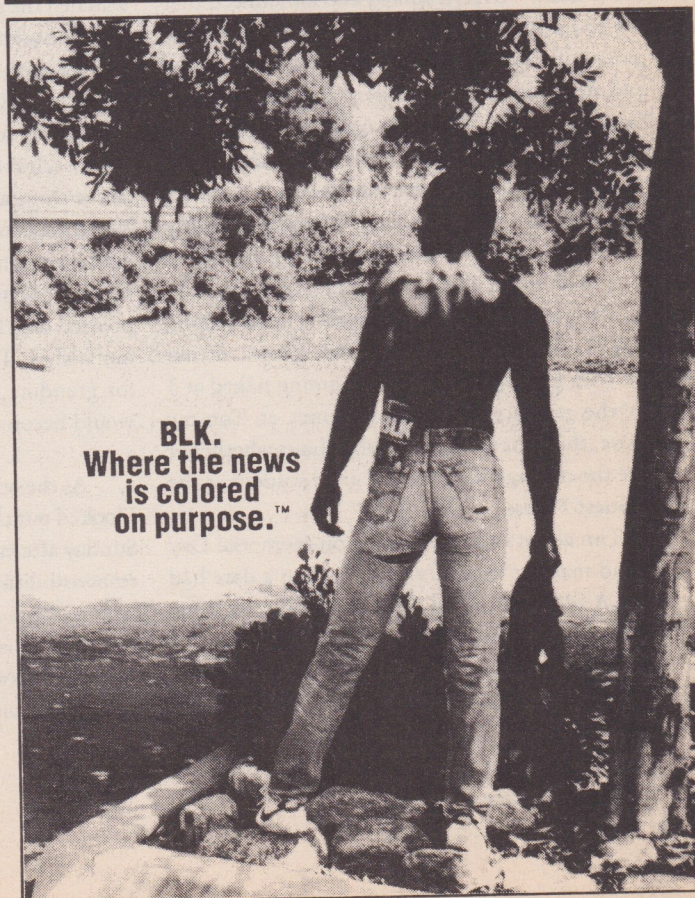
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IF FREUD HAD BEEN A NEUROTIC COLORED WOMAN:

Reading Dr. Frances Cress Welsing by Essex Hemphill

"[A]ny force which estranges and alienates us from one another serves the interests of racist domination."

— bell hooks, "Homeplace," *Yearning: race, gender, and cultural politics*

"That there is homophobia among black people in America is largely reflective of the homophobic culture in which we live... Yet, we cannot rationalize the disease of homophobia among the black people as the white man's fault, for to do so is to absolve ourselves of our responsibility to transform ourselves."

Cheryl Clarke, "The Failure to Transform: Homophobia in the Black Community" *Home Girls: A Black Feminist Anthology*

In 1974, the year that Dr. Frances Cress Welsing wrote, "The Politics Behind Black Male Passivity, Effeminization, Bisexuality, and Homosexuality," I entered my final year of senior high school.

By that time, I had arrived at a very clear understanding of how dangerous it was to be a black homosexual in my black neighborhood and in society. I had no particular inclinations to slip on a dress like skin, wear loud lipstick, and wiggle my hips through the four a.m. shadows and streetlights of the tenderloin or the boulevards where erotic desire was claimed by the highest bidder or the loneliest man. Facing this then limited perception of homosexual life, I could only wonder where did I fit in? I had no particular inclination to want to chase down men while wearing platform pumps and mini-skirts. None of this behavior was the least bit appealing to me.

Conversely, I was perfecting my heterosexual disguise; I was practicing the necessary use of masks for survival; I was calculating the distance between the first day of class and graduation; the distance between graduation from high school and departure for college, and ultimately, awaiting the arrival of my freedom from home, community, and my immediate peers. I believed my imminent independence would allow me to explore what my hetero-disguise and my masks were preventing me from exploring.

It is fortunate that the essay by Dr. Welsing which I am citing here had not come to my attention during my adolescence. I can only imagine how little resistance the assault of her ideas would have been met with by me at that time. At 17, I wasn't coming out of nothin I couldn't get back into immediately, and that included closets. But in 1974, the concepts of "closets" had not come to my attention. I knew not to reveal my homosexual desires to my peers nor discuss them with my family or any school counselor.

During the course of the next 16 years I would articulate and politicize my sexuality. I would discover that homo-sex did not comprise a whole life nor did it negate my racial identity or constitute a substantive reason to be estranged from my family and black culture. I discovered, too, that the work ahead for me included all of my identities into a functioning self as opposed to accepting a dysfunctional existence as the consequence for my homosexual desires.

In her "Black Male Passivity" essay, Dr. Welsing, a controversial, Washington, D.C.-based psychiatrist, cautions this:

Black psychiatrists must understand that whites may condone homosexuality for themselves, but we as Blacks, must see it as a strategy for destroying black people that must be countered. Homosexuals or bisexuals should neither be condemned nor degraded, as they did not decide that they would be so programmed in childhood. The racist system should be held responsible. Our task is to treat and prevent its continuing and increasing occurrence.

In other words, Dr. Welsing is suggesting, among other things, that black homosexuals are engaged in sexual-genocide, in treason against the race, and are programmed, by racism, to commit acts of self-destruction such as choosing to love and be loved by members of the same gender. If we dare follow Dr. Welsing's ideas to their illogical conclusions, then one could easily assign every black action that transgresses against or fails to conform to black society as being caused by racism. Such reasoning allows for the shirking of responsibility to the extent that a lack of responsibility for ourselves and a shifting of blame for our actions exacerbates the assault of racism and the subsequent crimes that occur. I am not suggesting that the victim be blamed for his victimization, I am only pointing that the addiction of responsibility in the face of racism creates and reinforces the climate for the increased nihilism presently plaguing black communities. It is simply too easy to say, "the devil made me do it."

Dr. Welsing's questionable claim to fame is her controversial essay, "The Cress Theory of Color-Confrontation and Racism (White Supremacy): A Psychogenetic Theory and World Outlook (1970)." This essay appears with her "Black Male Passivity" essay in her recently released book, "The Isis Papers: The Keys to the Colors" (Third World Press, Chicago). Her "Theory of Color-Confrontation" essay is the basis for her examination of various issues confronting black Americans including sexuality. Her arguments about race and sexuality, based on her theory, are her sincerely held beliefs. Dr. Welsing contextualizes her sexuality arguments in a myopic analysis of black masculinity, an analysis constructed from the still very limited, very patriarchal, and culturally conservative view of what black liberation should be; a view which is woefully informed by heterosexism and homophobia which she attempts to make credible.

In her "Black Male Passivity" essay, she asserts her arguments at the willful exclusion of a logical analysis of sexuality, thus discrediting her theory by espousing black homophobia and heterosexism, imitations of the very oppressive

forces she attempts to challenge — the hegemony of white male heterosexuality. She places herself in direct collusion with the forces that continually move against blacks, gays, lesbians, and all people of color. Thus, everytime a gay man or a lesbian woman is violently attacked, blood is figuratively on Dr. Welsing's hands as surely as blood is on the hands of the attackers. Her ideas reinforce the belief that gay and lesbian lives are expendable, and her views also provide a glimpse as to why the black community has failed to intelligently and coherently address critical, life-threatening issues such as AIDS.

Her reasoning flawed, out-dated, and totally hetero-reactionary, I am curiously reminded of the child who found himself faced with having to tell the emperor he's wearing one of the beautiful clothes that his court is leading him to believe he's wearing, or, as a more recent example, the discovery that Milli Vanilli really didn't sing a note of their hit song, "Girl You Know It's True."

Her Color-Confrontation theory is the justification for her homophobic and heterosexual assault. Her theory is very seductive, particularly for black people oppressed for so long. Her theory is very much like cocaine; a dose of her idea momentarily provides one with a rush of empowerment, but after the high is gone and one comes down, the harsh realities of racism still remain, and sexual diversity, as created by nature, still remains, irrevocably, uncontrollable, though she suggests that among black males, homosexuality and bisexuality are predictable behaviors by using her Color-Confrontation theory as a guide.

The basis of her theory, which is the basis for her puritanical assertions about black male sexuality and sexuality in general, is as follows:

[R]acism (white supremacy) is the dominant social system in today's world. It's fundamental dynamic is predicated upon the genetic recessive deficiency state of albinism, which is responsible for skin whiteness and thus the so-called "white race." This genetic recessive trait is dominated by the genetic capacity to produce any of the various degrees of skin melanation — whether black, brown, red, or yellow. In other words, it can be annihilated as a phenotypic condition. Control of this potential for genetic domination and annihilation throughout the world is absolutely essential if the condition of skin whiteness is to survive. "White survival is predicted upon aggressiveness and muscle mass in the form of technology directed against the "non-white" melaninated men on the planet Earth who constitute the numerical majority. Therefore, white survival and white power are dependent

upon the various methodologies, tactics and strategies developed to control all "non-white" men, as well as bring them into cooperative submission. This is especially important in the case of Black men because they have the greatest capacity to produce melanin and, in turn, the greatest genetic potential for the annihilation of skin albinism or skin whiteness.

This theory comprises the primary basis of her perspective as she approaches black male sexuality. From this framework she then asserts that after 400 years of being forced into "passive and cooperative submission" to white males, the end result for black males is the occurrence of homosexuality and bisexuality — what she deems as dysfunctional behavioral responses to oppression. "Black male homosexuality and bisexuality are the only long-run by-products of males submitting in fear to other males." She concludes this argument by stating that:

Black male bisexuality and homosexuality has been used by the white collective in its effort to survive genetically in a world dominated by colored people, and Black acceptance of this imposition does not solve the major problem of our oppression but only further retards its ultimate solution.

In attempting to explain homosexuality among whites, she writes:

[W]hite male and female homosexuality can be viewed as the final expression of their dislike of their genetic albinism in a world numerically dominated by colored people. This dislike of their appearance, though deeply repressed, causes a negation of the act of self-reproduction (sex), in various forms. This is the eventual origin of homosexuality...

Unlike the white male, the Black male does not arrive at

the effeminate bisexual or homosexual stance from any deeply repressed sense of genetic weakness, inadequacy or disgust, which I refer to as primary effeminacy (effeminacy that is self-derived and not imposed forcibly by others). Instead, the Black male arrives at this position secondarily, as the result of the imposed power and cruelty of the white male and the totality of the white supremacy social and political apparatus that has forced 20 generations of Black males into submission.

Sexuality has been and will always be as variable as eye color, but this obviously eludes Dr. Welsing. Her concern for the plight of black males and the destruction of black homespace, and her efforts to conjure resistance and provide solutions are not admirable when placed alongside her personal, unscientific opinions about sexuality. Her opinions are puritanical dogma and imitative of the status quo. She might as well say, "God made Adam and Eve, not Adam for Steve," as justification for her heterosexism, then she could sit and suck post-plantation cocktails with others of her mindset, such as Rev. Jerry Falwell, who is also a rabid heterosexist and a staunch homophobe.

Sex, having been granted as the one (though limited) area wherein Black males could express manhood, became the area of behavior where circular patterns of escape were acted out. Symbolically speaking, attempts were made to hide in the dark Black vaginal orifice. When that closed down, the white vaginal orifice was tried. When that also proved unsatisfactory as a hiding place or passage to freedom, Black and white male anuses were tried. Or one might say, these became the hoped for "undercover" railroads to freedom — the underground railroads as escape from the white man no longer being operative.

It is less than sophisticated reasoning to reduce such complexities as sexuality and its expression to the governing control and influence of white supremacy. To the extent that racism has aberrated the contexts and not the sexuality among people of color (and whites as well) is very much a legitimate examination of sexuality. However, her attempt to lead us to believe that passivity and submission in the context of racism causes homosexuality is to suggest that black liberation will somehow eradicate black homosexuality. And, if such eradication is to occur as a result of dismantling and destroying white supremacy, then what method(s) will be employed to achieve this? Does black liberation ultimately require the confinement or extermination of black homosexuals? Is there a heterosexual Similitude that can be given to black infants to prevent them from growing up and choosing to love within their own gender? Will black liberation cancel out homosexual desire? The answer is surely a resounding NO! Will black liberation fail without the unqualified participation of black gays and lesbians? The answer is an equally resounding YES!

What is also disturbing about her essay is her lack of a feminist analysis when approaching black liberation struggle. Here she writes:

All Black people are oppressed. I emphasize here that Black men are oppressed because ultimately, it is male muscle mass that oppresses a people, and only male muscle mass has the potential for achieving liberation. If the men of a people are oppressed, the women are brought under oppression — as they are dependent on their men for protection and defense. Women do not have the muscle mass to liberate a people and protect the young. Women develop the young, but their men must provide the protection and the security apparatus.

*Arthur D.
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By making this assessment, in the glaring absence of a progressive feminist analysis, she expediently excludes recognizing the existence of and the continued effort to achieve a co-gendered liberation. Her contentions are the worn-out, heterosexist contentions of black nationalists regarding homosexuals and women. Black nationalists believe, as does Dr. Welsing, that racism causes homosexuality. Black nationalists have also traditionally treated women as objects and devalued their participation in black liberation struggles believing, essentially, that women are to be seen and not heard and that they best serve "the black man" and the "black struggle" in horizontal instead of vertical positions.

That racist oppression has tragically torn apart the black family is a given, and consequently, a critical site for serious, co-gendered resistance to avoid continued destruction. But to the extent that sexual identity is a conscious, personal choice, and the sexuality practiced is the same, the most we can do is examine how sexuality is impacted upon and influenced by racism, in the same way that we can examine the impact of capitalism, religion, or patriarchy on sexuality.

Arguing that black men are alienated from their manhood by black women (their mothers in single-parent contexts) and society (white males), Dr. Welsing embarks upon the classic, homo-bashing tirade of black nationalist bullies who have consistently attacked homosexuals because they perceive us as simply being weak, irrelevant cock-suckers. She also buys into the patriarchal concept that the only legitimate family is one headed by a man with a submissive woman by his side. She blames black women who have been hurt by black men and left with raising children alone for also fostering the existence of black homosexuality,

because "the alienation, hate and disgust felt towards adult males are visited upon their sons subtly." This transference of "hate and disgust" supposedly alienates black male children from themselves and their manhood, "Black males soon learn that it is easier to be a female child than a male child, and more promising to be an adult Black female than an adult Black male." She additionally argues that this attitude is reinforced in black male children by the black women teachers they come into contact with who may also be "hurt and disgusted" with black men and again, transfer this to black males.

Arguing that the alienation between black men and women and the absence of male role models in the home and in the community promotes homosexuality, bisexuality, effeminization, and passivity, she writes:

There is only one solution — that Black males collectively face the horrendous presence of white males and conquer the accompanying fear engendered by this act. After the white man is faced, he must be resisted steadfastly and fought if he continues to wage war on Black people — as he has demonstrated historically that he intends to do. And it is Black males and not females who must do the fighting.

Finally, Dr. Welsing trots out the standard beliefs regarding prisons and the confinement of black men — that they, too, breed homosexuality as opposed to examining homosexuality in the context of the kinds of prison systems maintained in this country, and how homo-sex, more often than not, is essentially an act of domination and necessity within a prison context. These occurrences are exacerbated by an additional set of complex dynamics that cannot be excluded to simply revile homo-sex and homosexuality and construe

these occurrences to be caused by 20 generations of oppression and passive submission.

Dr. Welsing, speaking of an ex-prisoner patient whom she identifies as an example of 20 generations of racist abuse, confides in us that he said:

"It is easier to endure the life on the inside than to try to put up with the pressures of being a man, a husband and a father in the street." The intent of racist programming had been achieved: "Give up trying to be a Black man. Why not be a woman?" Many Black males have answered unconsciously, "Why not!" The braided and curled hair, the earrings and bracelets, the midriff tops, the cinch-waisted pants, the flowered underwear, the high-heeled shoes with platforms and the pocketbooks are all behavioral answers to the above. They say in loud and clear language, "White man, I will never come after you. I cannot run in my high-heels — you know that. And I may mess up my hair."

I suspect, however, that if Freud had been a neurotic, Black nationalistic colored woman living in the noxious racism of America, out of desperation he might very well have formulated homophobic/heterosexist theories such as Dr. Welsing's. Her "Black Male Passivity" essay is left-over dogma and rhetoric that lacks the credibility of truth. It is simply an essay of manipulated conjectures that ultimately reveal themselves as bogus.

Even among the oppressed there is a disturbing need for a convenient "other" to vent anger against, to blame, to disparage, and to denigrate. Such behavior is surely as detrimental as any an oppressor can exercise against the oppressed. There is no excuse for such behavior just as there is no credibility for Dr. Welsing's theories regarding sexuality. At best, her theories reinforce the rampant heterosexism that has paralyzed the black liberation struggle. She widens the existing breach between black gays and lesbians and their heterosexual counterparts, offering no bridges for joining our differences. And throughout it all, she fosters, not an understanding of our differences as we would be led to believe, but instead she offers justifications for homophobia and heterosexism to continue.

Black gays and lesbians can take sustenance and inspiration from the words of Cheryl Clarke, who in her 1983 essay, "The Failure to Transform: Homophobia in the Black Community" firmly urges us to do this:

[O]pen and proud black gay men and lesbians must take an assertive stand against the blatant homophobia expressed by members of the black intellectual and political community, who consider themselves custodians of the revolution. For if we will not tolerate the homophobia of the culture in general, we cannot tolerate it from black people, no matter what their positions in the black liberation movement. Homophobia is a measure of how far removed we are from the psychological transformation we so desperately need to engender. The expression of homophobic sentiments, the threatening political postures assumed by black radicals and progressives of the nationalist/communist ilk, and the seeming lack of any willingness to understand the politics of gay and lesbian liberation collude with the dominant white male culture to repress not only gay men and lesbians, but also to repress a natural part of all human beings, namely the bisexual potential in us all. Homophobia divides black people as political allies, it cuts off political growth, stifles revolution, and perpetuates patriarchal domination.

So, Dr. Welsing, you want to have a revolution, or are you just acting like you do? ▼

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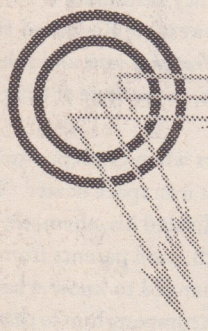


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PUSSY: Bunny, ever the arbiter of taste and fashion, keeps needling me about my spending habits in general, and my footwear in particular. He says as long as I can't walk in them anyway, and my feet are always in the dense shade of my hips, I could wear flip flops for the rest of my life and no one would notice. He just doesn't understand that shoes not only make the Girl, they must occasionally do double duty when the chauffeur doesn't show.

While shopping for *chapeaus* during the Mardi Gras (and wearing, incidentally, a pair of punky boots that cost three times Bunny's lifetime salary), I chanced into a vintage boutique run by a humpy Dago with a handlebar moustache and a bulge in his pants as big as the St. Charles streetcar.

Ever the *coquette*, I did my best Crawford, smearing Red Lust way up over my lipline and modeling everything from pegnoirs to Pendletons. I settled on a fabulous veiled *cloche* and a pair of the tallest "fuck me" pumps that set me back almost the price of my airfare.

Signor Shopboy asked if I was enjoying the sights and I said I could stand to see more of them... he dusted off a Borselino and a snazzy silk tie, and whisked me off to some really big balls. The next few days were a blur as we convulsed our way through Carnival, stopping only for an occasional pee and a re-touch. As the debacle reached its denouement, I had but one last request—a Mardi Gras morn viewing of the fearsome Black King Zula, atop his river barge. My obliging squire suggested that the final *fête* be an all-night spree, beginning with formal dinner in a fancy restaurant.

I was resplendent, if I say so, from the top of my head—crowned this night by an awesome Raymond Hudd original, replete with maribu and quail, to my Paige Mayberried shoulders, kissed by a sensuous *frappé* of *voile* and silk, to my dainty little toes, encased, as it were, in lovely little black velvet slippers with gilded metal heels, in the style of Charles Jourdan—but, in this instance, courtesy of K-Mart.

We dined and drank and danced and dined and drank some more until the wee hours when Guiseppe spirited me back to his shop for a spot of champagne, served on the floor in front of a quaint little wrought iron space heater. We sipped and giggled and groped by gaslight until quarter to Zulu, when my date sat bolt upright, adjusted his, ahem, tie and mumbled something about a previous engagement...a girl he'd been seeing...a Mardi Gras brunch...and parents from Kansas...

On another night they could have heard my shrieks all the way to Wichita as I demanded to know what, pray tell, he planned to do with me? The genius had it all worked out, or so he thought, suggesting I accompany him to this family affaire, where he'd pass me off as an old school chum. Fat chance, I rebutted, reminding him that, disheveled décolletage notwithstanding, unless he went to beauty school or clown college, not even Auntie Em and Uncle Henry would fall for such crap. I stood up, tucked my titties, and with an ill-conceived theatrical flourish, stormed out the door...

★★★★

And now the humiliating *mise en scène* unfolds. Picture an entire city paralyzed by pleasure, so much so that the buses can't run, and the cabbies are all in tights and masks, flinging dubloons from truckfloats in the parishes. Picture a neighborhood where no woman tread unescorted—ever—and where all the nasty boys have been drinking non-stop for three days in anticipation of this very morning. Picture a primitive street, semi-paved with bricks and stones and lined with open ditches, filled to an overflowing. Now picture Pussy.

Those fucking slippers didn't even last a block before one heel snapped right off, forcing me to limp down the street like a travelling production of Glass Menagerie. My audience—loaded locals *en route* to the parade—hooted and cheered as the second heel broke and I collapsed in a heap in the gutter. I gave the pumps to a needy queen and trekked the ten blocks home in stocking feet.

On that day, I made a solemn vow:

*If ever I find myself down on my luck
Scouring for frocks in the dumps
And getting my hair cut and blown at Bo-Rics
I still will wear good pumps!*

An Open Apology To Our Readers

While neither of us can deny that we're powerhungry sluts, ever-eager to foist our *weltanschauung* on all those who cross our paths, we never dreamed it would happen like this. It seems the Piss Police have attacked the Circle Campus Fountain of Youths (Critics Notebook, *Thing* Number 2) reconfiguring the delightful spa of iniquity, removing the portals of pleasure and extending all possible sightlines for easy monitoring. While we truly feel for all those whose goings and comings have been disrupted, we can't help but wonder who the, ahem, whistleblower was and gloat that, perhaps, our manifesti have been read by poufs in powerful places.

Love Among the Ruins

The ever-intrepid Miss Gigi recalls a pre-AIDS interlude that began with the usual hunt and peck in a notorious sissy saloon and ended with an invitation to a *ménage-a-trois* extended by a *soigne deuce* from Tinley Park. In the process of getting from here to there, they acquired a large number of stragglers, prompting our Gal Gigi to wax ecstatic. "Surely in a group this size," she mused "there will be someone man enough to fuck me." Once ensconced in the suburban hometown, she acquitted herself in her usual grand style—suffering through the obligatory chips and dips and admiring the clown collection like the trooper she is, until finally, the host said, "Now."

Gigi beat a hasty path to the *boudoir*, where she dropped trow, bit the bedspread and braced herself for the onslaught. "Please God," she prayed, "let it hurt." And she waited and waited and waited for what seemed like eternity, till she opened her eyes, saw eight pairs of legs, soles facing skyward and sighed, "Shit! Another night in Stonehenge."

La Fanciulla Del West Hollywood

One of our far-hung correspondents sent this *communiqué* from La La Land:

...I was back up north again the first week of June for a retreat sponsored by the Body Electric school on the Russian River. It was a wonderful experience. I was re-birthered several times, gave and received a number of erotic massages and met many extraordinary people. I will give you more details when we next speak but this one-week retreat was worth years of therapy... I may start exploring the S&M scene, at least I have joined an S&M support group. Who knows, the next time I see you I might be wearing chains and chaps.

S&M support group? The more we think about it, we don't even want sex anymore...just disciples.

Louis Tiffany's Comfort

Entschuldigen sie, bitte, ist das ihre Shvanz est in mein Tasche gefallen?

Excuse me, please, it seems your penis has fallen into my pocket.

— A useful German Phrase

One of our New Orleans cousins headed to the Big Apple to suck up some culture. Whilst at the Metropolitan Museum he made serious eye contact with a California surfer type who had no doubt journeyed East to suck up some of the same. Our friend snaked his way through the labyrinthine galleries, with Beach Buns in hot pursuit, dallying in front of several suggestive *oeuvres* and, finally, coming to rest in front of an imposing Tiffany triptych. The hushed reverence of the darkened

alcove was suddenly ended by a *hammerschlag* zipppppppp—startling the lunchtime crowd and rousing our friend from his reveries, into the reality of a hot breath in his ear...and a hard cock in his hand. The impassioned art lovers scurried off to view the great porcelain throne—in whose chamber they spent well nigh the rest of the afternoon, recreating Michaelangelo's greatest hits as interpreted by Tom of Finland...until the moment of climax when the Sand Stud spurted a stunning homage to Jackson Pollack—on the wall of the stall. Ain't art grand.

A Moveable Feast

We could try and disguise the identity of the source for this sordid tale but, by now, you'd guess it was Gigi... and here's what she did this summer: It seems they were doing some road-work near her home. For the convenience of the laborers, a porta-san was installed right by her

expressway entrance. Ever the opportunist, she stopped her car on the median, feigning engine trouble, and made a discrete dash into the loo, where she scribbled her number in indelible ink. As lust would have it, she received an inquiry that very day and was visited by a workingclass hero at the end of the night shift. *Après tryst*, she promptly called in to file her report. When she got to the part about leaving her number in the "cute little outhouse" Bunny realized that the dear lamb had failed to grasp a fundamental concept about outdoor commodes. "You realize," he explained, patiently, "that the toilet is neither a permanent fixture nor a disposable one. It will be moved to another location as soon as the job is done. That's why it's called a Porta-Potty." Gigi was delighted by the news. "To think I've spent a fortune in petrol driving all around this confounded city, leaving my name in public restrooms, and, now the Highway Department will do it for me. I can't wait to taste my tax dollars at work."



HEALTH ALTERNATIVES

by Stephen
Freshwater

Since my words of frustration with ACT UP in the last issue of *Thing*, I was proven wrong by a small but growing minority of ACT UP members who are practicing alternative medicine and are dedicated to the release of information regarding alternative health care to individuals who have either HIV or AIDS.

From September 15-19 1990, ACT UP Kansas City (Missouri) hosted a "Health Fraud" conference protest along with ACT UP New York. The health conference that was the target of protest was sponsored by the American Medical Association (AMA) and the Health Insurance Association with participation by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA).

The conference was designed to teach insurance, health and consumer officials techniques to discredit and suppress non-AMA, non-FDA approved treatments.

Twenty-three ACT UP members and

supporters were arrested during this protest. Bob Lederer, member ACT UP New York, believes like many of us that "we don't need 'consumer protectors' to prevent people with HIV and AIDS from exercising informed choices of any treatment available, no matter from what system of healing." I'm glad to see their agenda go beyond free AZT, Pentab, and DDI.

There are actions to stop the supersession of alternative health care going on all over America, and in the rest of the world. If we don't succeed, there could be anti-fraud laws passed to outlaw selling, prescribing or even advising about such treatments. (Though there should be some legislation to keep an eye on

this growing industry to watch for such things as over-pricing and fraudulent practitioners.)

If you would like to help or want more information, write me c/o *Thing* and I will

**THE GOVERNMENT HAS
BLOOD ON ITS HANDS**



**ONE AIDS DEATH
EVERY HALF HOUR**

A Gran Fury graphic used by ACT UP New York. From Douglas Crimp's AIDS DEMO GRAPHICS (Bay Press).

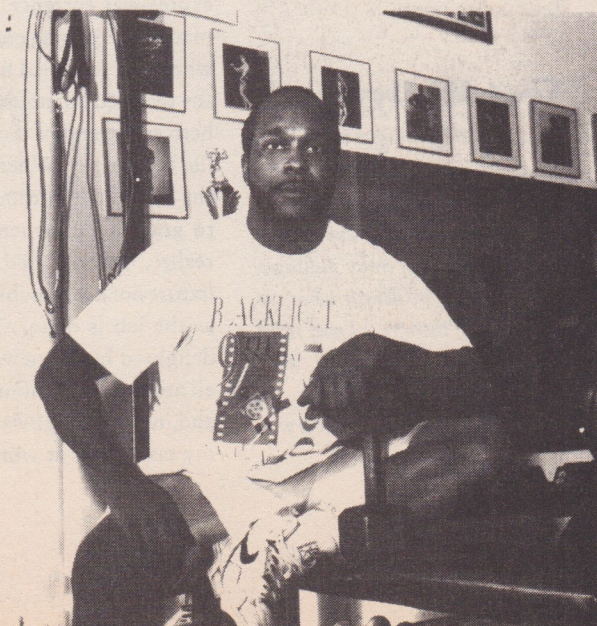
"Remember the wild and wooly days?"

I still have a satisfying, rewarding lifestyle...only now I'm not careless about it. But it took some listening — and talking — to get there. That's what I got at a STOP AIDS CHICAGO discussion group."

— **Walter Matthews**

To attend a
STOP AIDS CHICAGO
discussion group, call
312-871-3300 or
312-752-STOP

PHOTO Thom Paris



*It's about
change.
And isn't it
about time?*

try to get it to you. Please enclose a SASE.



Reviewing the many news releases that we receive here at Thing, I have to say that the Gay Men's Health Crisis (GMHC) in New York City has got it together. Craig G. Harris who is the Assistant Coordinator of the GMHC People of Color Prevention Program was quite pleased to note that GMHC has increased the number of people of color on their staff and volunteering, and has drastically increased the number of African-American gay men who have been served through GMHC's education program. Along with that, GMHC is beginning to form a tight union with the Gay Men of African Descent (GMAD). There are more programs, many which support alternative health care.

Here in Chicago, I am happy to see progress as well, with the opening of the Northside HIV Treatment Center (NHTC). Founded by acupuncturists Arthur Shattuck and Mary Kay Ryan, they've just opened their donation only clinic on Tuesdays and Thursdays at the new Rodde Center (4753 N. Broadway). They provide

traditional Chinese medicine, massage and acupuncture for all people impacted by HIV. Future plans are to open a library of alternative health information. For appointments, to volunteer, or to make a much-needed donation contact Arthur Shattuck at (312) 472-9156.



Many caregivers for HIV and AIDS patients frequently suffer from stress, burn-out, and grief. I was glad to see a retreat sponsored in Chicago called "Building Bridges, Healing Ourselves" for AIDS caregivers, coordinated by Kermit Berg and friends. Reports are that it was quite energizing and successful, and another is being planned soon. For information or to make a donation write: Chicago Area AIDS Caregivers' Retreat c/o Kermit Berg, 321 Sangamon Street, Chicago, IL 60607.



I would like to encourage all of you who are suffering from HIV or AIDS to look into Aloe Vera juice. There are many benefits to receive from this miracle plant. For HIV fatigue, a combination of Bee Pollen, Spir-

ulina, Wheat Grass and Ginseng is highly recommended. I take a great product called Ultra Energy Plus. It gives you all of the above except the ginseng, so I supplement it with a ginseng capsule. Ultra Energy Plus contains bee pollen, spirulina, and wheat grass, as well as a number of other good energy supplying substances, including amino acids.



Finally, I would like for you to take a moment and ask yourself if you are at peace with yourself. Ask yourself "do I want to survive this illness we call AIDS?" If you answered yes to these questions, then get control of your life and always picture yourself — in your mind and in the mirror — in good health. To learn more about a positive approach I suggest "The AIDS Book — Creating a Positive Approach" by Louise L. Hay (Hay House). She has helped thousands of HIV and AIDS impacted people gain control of their illness. This book will also help anyone facing a life-threatening illness.

May the Almighty bless you and please stay healthy.

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Ask Marjorie Marginal

Advice For Real Life

GO BALD

I'm wondering if I should braid my hair. Really. I mean, I'm one of those "hi yellor" types with good hair, and it just won't dread, no matter how hard I try. I'm looking to do a more Afrocentric kind of look, but I'm afraid that in braids it might be too Milli Vanilli. Please help.

— Fashion Dysfunctional

Dear Fashion,

Please don't braid Miss Marjorie's hair over whether you should braid your hair or not. Personal grooming decisions must be made, kept, and worn with a certain depth of conviction, or not at all. If you don't know if you want to braid your hair or not, Miss Marjorie certainly doesn't. Nor does anyone else. And braided hair, worn timidly or indecisively, will most certainly beg comparison to Milli Vanilli, Bo Derek, and Glodeen, to name a few. Do you seek advice on the color of your underpants and brand of mouthwash too? Miss Marjorie hopes not. As long as you eschew beads and don't pierce your nose, you won't look silly vanilli at all. Trust me.

SEARCHIN' TO FIND THE ONE

I'm having a hard time finding a lover. I've tried 900 numbers, dating services, cruising, volunteer work, etc. and I can't seem to reel one in. Oh sure, there are the quickies. The ones that want to "drop by" now and again. But I'm rapidly growing weary of this "That Girl" bachelorette life, and would like to settle down once and for all. Any advice?

— Lonely Reader

Dear Lonely,

Stop whining, honey. Miss Marjorie would like to see some of this trade that goes spinning through your revolving door. But seriously, the quest for l'amour is perilous at best, fraught with suffering and heartache. It ain't gonna change. Been that way for years. And once you do snag boyfriend, you'll find he leaves the cap off the toothpaste or some other little thing that makes you want to shoot him sometimes. That's how love is. My advice is to use condoms and stick to Barbara Cartland for the mushy stuff.

write to Marjorie...she cares about you!

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THE INNER THING

Mundane astrology is the astrological study of countries, states and cities. Much can be discovered from the chart of the American people:

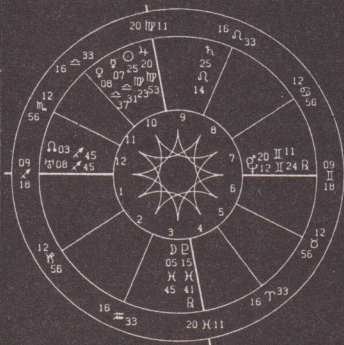
This chart of the American people originated from the creation of the oldest permanent European settlement in the country. Most of these planets are in mutable signs (Sagittarius, Gemini, Virgo, Pisces) and quite a few are air signs (Gemini, Libra). This mutable air (Gemini) quality points to the American love for novelty, movement and communication. Americans have a love of independence and freedom (Uranus

on the Rising sign). In love with speed and always in a hurry, the American Sun is in Virgo. With the Sun and Jupiter at the midheaven, America will always occupy a position of prominence among the nations of the world. Americans have a great desire for achievement and success, and most rise above their "original station" in life (all a matter of perception, I suppose). Being an ambitious people with strong egos, Americans are more interested in foreign relations

than in domestic relations. This is because six signs (in the chart) are in fire and air, the (and their budgets) giving Americans the reputation of a universal Santa Claus. Our obsession with health and cleanliness may be traced to the Sun and Jupiter in Virgo. Mars in the seventh house points to the aggressive attitude Americans have taken towards foreign nations. While America has never openly provoked a war, they have stepped in other's. The danger in foreign alliances arises when America tries to dominate others, for they do not easily give in

and compromise. They are a highly independent people preferring to go their own way instead of listening to the lessons of history.* The American Mars in Gemini seems to have profound meaning as our president is a Gemini with a Gemini rising. This is open ground for a lot of Gemini adaptability, flexibility and cunning. Quite simply put, no one ever knows what face George Bush is really wearing...including George.

*Horoscopes of the Western Hemisphere, Marc Heeren Penfield.



by iris kit

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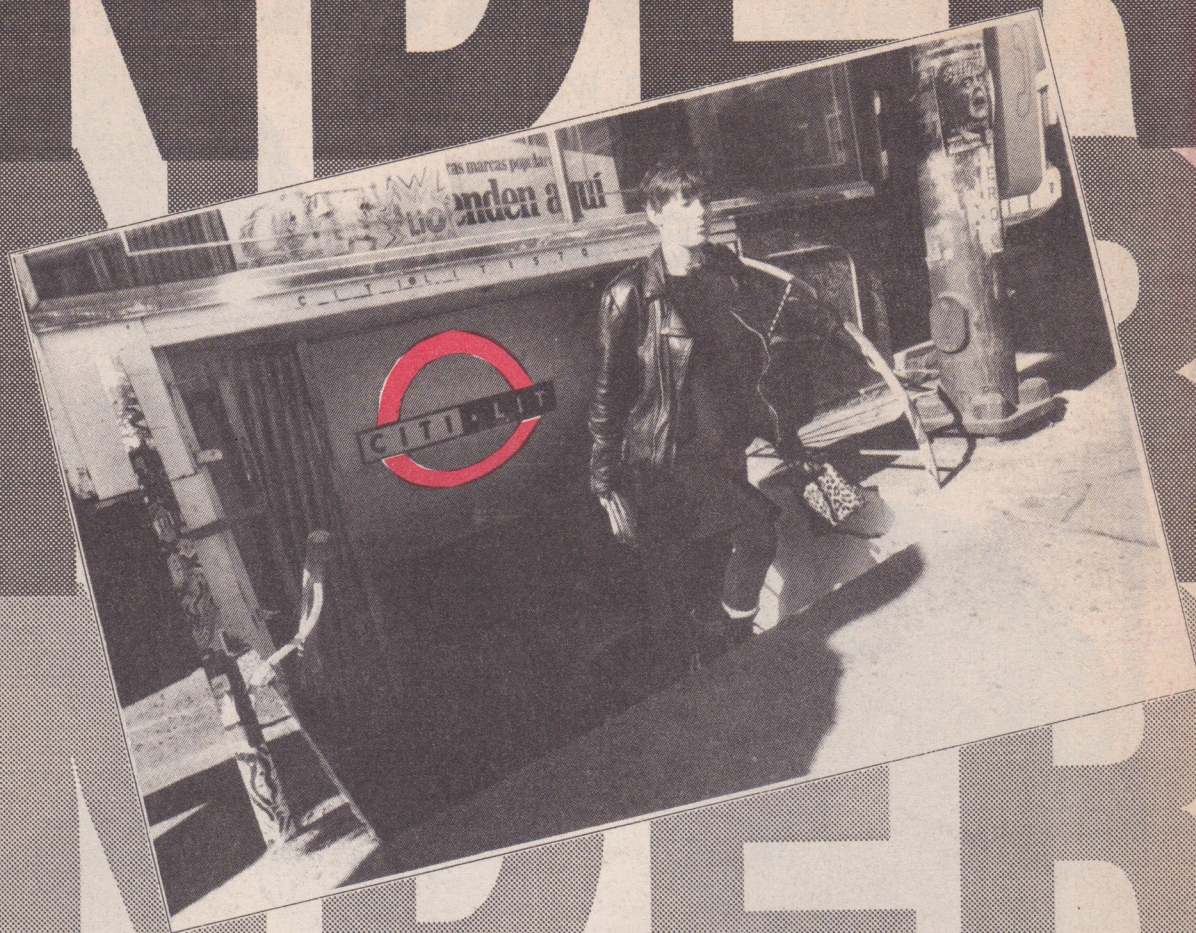
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